

Late Love

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

by Rosemary Casey

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GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA



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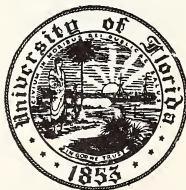
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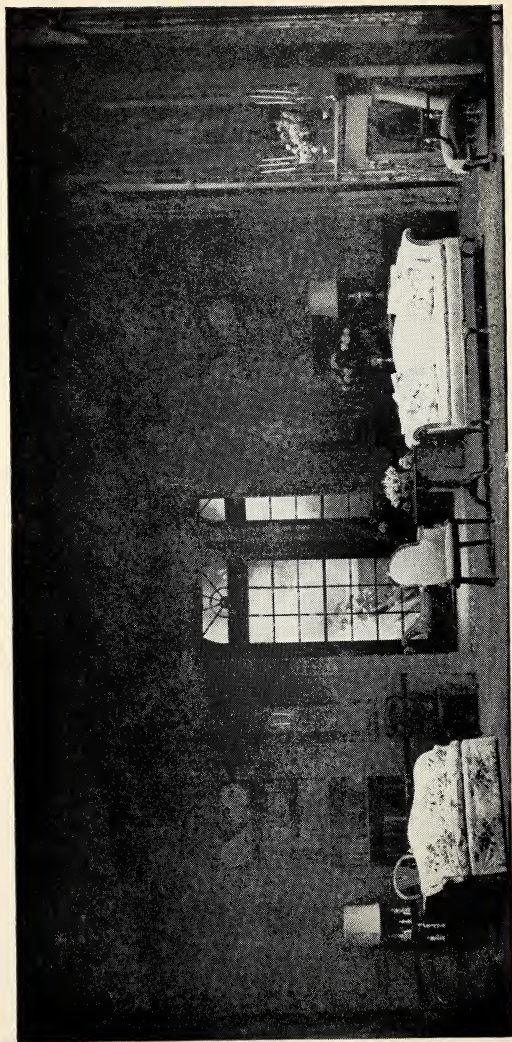
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LATE LOVE

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by Rosemary Casey

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LATE LOVE

STORY OF THE PLAY

(3 males; 4 females)

A famous lady portraitist moves into the country home of a prominent widower-writer to paint his portrait. Almost at once she discovers the premises to be dominated by the writer's mother, an impossible old harridan who won't permit smoking, radios or liquor in the house, who insists on punctuality at meals, and otherwise browbeats everyone into a state of timorous dejection. But of course the painter is a lady of colossal charm and almost inhuman perception. In no time she has fostered the romance of her subject's daughter and his male secretary, a young scholar not considered suitable by the father. At the same time she is, herself, the center of a growing romance with the father and his other guest, a humorous broker. But she has the leisure to charm the bonnet off the grandmother, get the portrait painted, and eventually pull together all the loose ends.

LATE LOVE

Comedy by Rosemary Casey; staged by John C. Wilson; setting and lighting by Stewart Chaney; presented by Michael Abbott, with the cooperation of associate producers Howard Erskine and Bonnie Alden at the National Theatre, Oct. 13, 1953.

THE CAST

BILLY GORDON	<i>Frank Albertson</i>
MATTHEW ANDERSON	<i>Cliff Robertson</i>
SARAH	<i>Ann Dere</i>
GRAHAM COLBY	<i>Neil Hamilton</i>
JANET COLBY	<i>Elizabeth Montgomery</i>
MRS. COLBY	<i>Lucile Watson</i>
CONSTANCE WARBURTON	<i>Arlene Francis</i>

SCENE: *The Colbys' living room.*

Late Love

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The living room of the Colby home in Connecticut.*

TIME: *A Sunday afternoon early in September of the present year.*

The room is handsomely furnished, in a way that inclines more to dignity than to comfort. There is a fireplace stage Left between French windows. A door down Right leads to GRAHAM COLBY'S study. Double doors in the Center wall open into a hallway and are partially closed. There are several open bookshelves which contain books in good, and obviously old, bindings, and there is a kneehole desk, also old and good, at the Right Center, back of love seat. A chair down Right; whatnot up Right. Chairs Right and Left of Center door; dropleaf table up Left; pie-crust table Center; chair Center; sofa Left Center; chairs Left and down Left.

As sunlight is at present pouring in from two closed French windows stage Left, the room has a look of pleasantness, but one would hesitate to take liberties with it. And no one has. It is in perfect order. It is, however, the kind of room that easily resists disorder. There are no ash-trays to be overfilled, few small ornaments to be knocked

over. The inkstand on the desk is a heavy, stable-looking object and even the telephone suggests that it rarely moves from its present position at the Left corner of the desk.

When the Curtain rises a TYPEWRITER is heard off Right. BILLY GORDON enters. He is a man in the forties who normally looks as if he were well pleased with life. He crosses quickly to the desk. Then, standing so that he commands a view of both doors, he cautiously lifts the receiver and dials the operator. After a moment he speaks in a carefully lowered voice.

BILLY. Operator, I want to put in a call to New York, and it's urgent!—Regent 7-2089. It's Lakeville 781— Thank you— (*Closes double doors Center and returns to phone*) Sis, this is Billy! Thank God you're there!—I'll tell you later, I can't talk now— Sis, I want you to call me here at the Colbys' in twenty minutes— Lakeville 781. But make it a person to person call, so that it'll look important!—You're to tell me that Pete has had a heart attack, and that I'm to come in at once!—

(Stop TYPING.)

I've been here a week in the last twenty-four hours— He has a mother! (*Listens and smiles*) Is she? She'd take a blue ribbon for the best of breed! Sis! You're a life-saver!

(As he hangs up and crosses to stage Left, looking very pleased, the door at Right opens and MATTHEW ANDERSON enters. MATTHEW is an intelligent, rather shy-looking young man in the early thirties. As he wears tortoise-shell glasses, and is carrying some papers in a file, it is evident that he is a secretary.)

Hello there!

MATTHEW. (*Having looked quickly around the room, crosses to Center*) I beg your pardon. I thought Mr. Colby was here. (*He turns to go back to the study.*)

BILLY. Please don't go!

(MATTHEW stops.)

It's so wonderful to see a human being again!

MATTHEW. You mean you've been alone?

BILLY. For years! Ever since lunch!

MATTHEW. But I thought you were going to play chess with Mr. Colby!

BILLY. (*Bitterly*) So did I!

MATTHEW. (*Puzzled*) He's not writing, is he?

BILLY. I don't know what he's doing, poor devil! We were just going to get out the chess board when the maid came in to say that his mother wanted him. You are the first living creature I have seen since then.

MATTHEW. (*Smiling a very nice smile*) That sounds horrible.

BILLY. That is— (*Sits on sofa Left*) not too strong a word.

MATTHEW. I hope you found something decent to read.

BILLY. I couldn't find anything else. And I looked everywhere!

MATTHEW. I wish I had known. There are some modern books in the house.

BILLY. It doesn't matter. What I really wanted was to hear a voice again. I hope you needn't take yours away!

MATTHEW. (*By chair Center*) No, I've finished everything I had to do. (*He puts his papers on Center table, and sits down.*)

BILLY. You don't keep union hours, do you?

MATTHEW. I don't usually work on Sundays, but the mail's been very heavy this week.

BILLY. Fan mail?

MATTHEW. Mostly. And Mr. Colby likes to send a personal letter to everyone who writes to him.

BILLY. I know. That's how I happened to meet him. I sent him a fan letter fifteen years ago. It was after I had read *The Silent Valley*. I finished the book, dried my eyes, and sat down and wrote to him. I must have

been drunk at the time, because I don't remember thinking it was an odd thing to do.

MATTHEW. It was a very nice thing to do.

BILLY. So he said. He also said that we must dine together the next time he came to New York. We did, and we've been good friends ever since, although I've never visited him before.

MATTHEW. You liked him the first time you met?

BILLY. Yes, very much! We spent three hours together, and we never mentioned his books.

MATTHEW. What *did* you talk about?

BILLY. My profession! Stocks and bonds. Colby is one of the few writers I know who isn't a bubble-head about money. He said to me that night—it was just a few months after his wife died, "I've got to be careful. I have a growing daughter to provide for." *(He produces a package of cigarettes and a box of matches and MATTHEW leans forward anxiously.)*

MATTHEW. *(Rises. Crosses above chair to end of sofa Left)* Mr. Gordon!

BILLY. Yes?

MATTHEW. Forgive me, but I think I ought to remind you that Mr. Colby's mother will be coming down shortly.

BILLY. *(Genially)* Why borrow trouble, my boy? She's not here yet! *(He puts a cigarette in his mouth.)*

MATTHEW. I mean, if you're going to smoke—!

BILLY. Oh, hell, I forgot! *(He hurls the cigarette into the fireplace.)*

MATTHEW. It's easy to do. I had an awful time when I first came here. *(He crosses to the fireplace.)*

BILLY. What are you doing?

MATTHEW. Just retrieving your cigarette. We're not allowed to throw things in the fireplace.

(He picks up the cigarette. Hands it to BILLY, who looks for a place to hide it.)

BILLY. How long have you been working here?

MATTHEW. A little over three months.

BILLY. Were you starving when you took the job?

MATTHEW. (*Smiling*) Not quite.

BILLY. I'll be damned.

MATTHEW. There are compensations, you know.
(*Crosses to Center.*)

BILLY. (*Sits on sofa*) A friend of mine who had been in jail for several years said the same thing. But he was very glad to get out.

MATTHEW. (*Smiling*) I can understand that!

(*The Center doors open and a MAID enters rolling a tea table on which is a cloth and five cups and saucers and a tea bell. This is SARAH, an elderly, neat and rather grim-looking woman. She enters quietly.*)

BILLY. Now what happens?

MATTHEW. Now we have tea. (*To SARAH, in an anxious voice*) Has Miss Janet gotten back?

(*BILLY rises as SARAH places table in front of sofa.*)

SARAH. No, sir.

MATTHEW. Oh, Lord!

SARAH. (*Crosses to MATTHEW*) Don't worry, Mr. Anderson. We still have seven minutes.

MATTHEW. (*Quickly consulting his watch*) No, only two!

SARAH. (*Crosses up to door. Firmly*) Seven. I've seen to it!

MATTHEW. Oh.

(*SARAH goes off, and MATTHEW turns to BILLY and speaks in a voice that is both hurried and diffident.*)

(*Crossing to back of sofa*) Mr. Gordon, have you a watch?

BILLY. Yes, I have. (*Displaying it*) Do you want it?

MATTHEW. No, but would you—would you mind turning it back five minutes?

BILLY. (*Crossing back to MATTHEW*) Not at all!

(*He and MATTHEW adjust their watches.*)

I suppose this is for a reason?

MATTHEW. Yes. It'll give Miss Janet a few extra minutes. There's always a scene if anyone's late, and she frequently is.

BILLY. You mean you've even got to be on time for tea in this house?

MATTHEW. Oh, yes!

BILLY. But what if you don't want tea?!

MATTHEW. That wouldn't matter. When you've been here a week, you'll realize that tea is a very solemn institution.

BILLY. (*Sits chair Left. He smiles and takes a deep breath*) When I've been here a week!

MATTHEW. You're staying until Saturday, aren't you?

BILLY. (*Recovering, and somewhat embarrassed*) That was the original idea.

MATTHEW. I thought Mr. Colby said that. He's been looking forward to your visit.

BILLY. So have I! Another proof that an intelligent man will count on exactly nothing in life!

(*GRAHAM COLBY enters Center. He is an attractive, thoughtful looking man in the early fifties. He smiles rarely, but when he does, very pleasant things happen to his face.*)

Ah, there he is! Graham, what the devil happened to you?

GRAHAM. (*Walking down Center*) Nothing extraordinary. Mother wanted me to read to her. I usually do on Sunday afternoons, and she didn't feel that you're being here altered the situation.

(*MATTHEW crosses to back of desk Right Center.*)

BILLY. You mean that you've been reading aloud for two and a half hours?!

GRAHAM. Just.

BILLY. And I've been pitying myself!

GRAHAM. (*Crosses to front of sofa*) Probably with reason! What did you do this afternoon?

BILLY. I read, and went out to the garden to smoke, and read, and went out to the garden to smoke, and— (*He has begun this in an irritable tone, but at the sight of GRAHAM'S remorseful face, he abruptly changes his tone*) It's been delightful; I've enjoyed it.

GRAHAM. (*Smiling*) You're a very engaging liar. If I had known that I was going to be with Mother, you could have gone to the club with Janet, to watch the tennis. (*To MATTHEW*) Has Janet come home yet?

MATTHEW. No, she hasn't.

GRAHAM. I do hope she's not going to be late!

BILLY. She won't be. Matthew and I have taken care of that!

GRAHAM. Have you, indeed!

BILLY. Don't ask now. Just sit down and relax.

GRAHAM. That's very pleasant advice. (*As he is about to sit down his eye falls on MATTHEW'S papers*) Matthew, what are these?

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to table Center. Takes papers*) Just some papers that I was going to file. I'll do them now. (*He takes them*) I've finished the letters that you wanted to get off this afternoon. Will you sign them now?

GRAHAM. There's hardly time. I'll do them after tea.

MATTHEW. Yes, sir. (*He goes into the study Right—closing door.*)

GRAHAM. (*Sitting down Left end of sofa*) Ah, this is good. I'm tired. I don't know why I should be—

BILLY. I know! It's because you lead the damndest life I've ever heard of!

GRAHAM. I think my life is very pleasant!

BILLY. What's pleasant about it?

(GRAHAM *looks amused.*)

You work like a navvy, and what do you get out of it?

GRAHAM. A certain amount of success, I hope!

BILLY. A great deal! But what good does it do you?
(*Rises, crosses back of sofa*) You never go anywhere, you never see anyone, you never do anything!

GRAHAM. I happen to enjoy writing. Isn't that worth mentioning?

BILLY. How many hours a day do you write?

GRAHAM. About four.

BILLY. That leaves twenty hours every day in which to be bored and lonely!

GRAHAM. I'm never bored. And I'm certainly never lonely! Now that Janet's finished college, I'll have her, and I always have Mother!

BILLY. Yes. (*Crosses and sits sofa Left Center. Diffidently, after hesitating*) I don't quite know how to put this, but I think you ought to get more out of life than you do. I know that you're devoted to your mother, and all that, but if you read to her every Sunday, and play cribbage with her every night— Well, I mean there are less successful people who have even fuller lives!

GRAHAM. I daresay. But there are very few people who owe as much to their mothers as I do.

BILLY. She brought you into the world! But that's kind of routine activity for a mother, isn't it?

GRAHAM. She didn't stop there. When my wife died, Mother gave up her own home to come and take care of Janet and me. It wasn't easy for her to leave Minnesota. It was a real sacrifice, and I can't forget it.

BILLY. Without forgetting it, couldn't you have a little more fun?

GRAHAM. Not at the expense of Mother's happiness! You see, we weren't very well off when I was a boy, and Mother and Dad did without things to give me the kind of education I wanted. Dad died before I had

a chance to repay him, but as long as Mother is alive—
(*He leaves this sentence unfinished.*)

BILLY. The fact is, you ought to have married again!

GRAHAM. This from a man who never married at all!

BILLY. Well, if I had once started, I think I'd have kept at it!

(*A GONG rings three times, very loudly, and BILLY jumps, rises.*)

What in God's name is that?

GRAHAM. (*Amused*) Just the gong. It means that tea will be ready in three minutes.

BILLY. (*Still shaken*) Does that happen every day?

GRAHAM. Yes. It was an idea of Mother's.

(*BILLY nods.*)

When Janet was a child, she'd often be playing outside and forget the time, so Mother invented the gong.

BILLY. Very clever!

(*The TELEPHONE rings, and BILLY's expression brightens. Crosses toward desk.*)

Shall I answer that?

GRAHAM. No, Matthew will take it in the study. Are you expecting a call?

BILLY. Yes, I am. My sister's husband hasn't been very well— (*Crosses back Center*) and—

(*BILLY breaks off as MATTHEW enters from study and crosses to Center.*)

Is that for me?!

MATTHEW. It's for Mr. Colby. (*To GRAHAM*) It's Mrs. Warburton.

GRAHAM. Mrs. Warburton! Where's she calling from?

MATTHEW. I didn't ask her. But I supposed that you'd want to talk to her.

GRAHAM. Of course I do. I'll take it in the study. Excuse me, Billy! (*He goes into the study, closing the door behind him.*)

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to back of Center table. Coming down*) Has Miss Janet come?

BILLY. (*Crossing back of sofa*) No, she hasn't. And

since she's younger than you are, why do you call her Miss Janet?

MATTHEW. (*Moves to BILLY*) Mrs. Colby told me that I should.

BILLY. (*Crosses up Left*) That, of course, settles that!

(SARAH enters Center, carrying a plate of bread and butter.)

MATTHEW. (*Taking plate from SARAH—places it on tea table*) Well, Sarah, it looks as if we were going to lose!

SARAH. (*Calmly, and not looking up*) We've won. Her car came up the driveway as I left the kitchen.

MATTHEW. Thank heaven.

SARAH. Amen. (*She goes off Center.*)

BILLY. Now do we turn our watches ahead?

MATTHEW. Lord, no! We stay on this time until dinner. Sarah changes the clocks while we're having soup.

BILLY. Fascinating! (*Taking cigarette*) Now tell me, is there a house rule that forbids smoking after the gong has sounded?

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to BILLY. Having considered this*) No.

BILLY. Then you don't think that all hell would break loose if I went out there and had,—let's say, one-third of a cigarette?

MATTHEW. I'm sure it would be all right.

BILLY. Good!

(*He takes out his cigartttes, and turns Left. As he does so, JANET COLBY enters through the French windows down Left. She is in the early twenties, pretty, and full of vitality. She looks around the room, and then speaks in a voice of jubilant relief.*)

JANET. I made it!

BILLY. (*Starts out Left and stops. Irritably*) No, young lady, you didn't! Only God knows what time it really is, but you're late! (*He goes out to the terrace, upstage Left, and stops there to smoke his cigarette.*)

JANET. (*Crosses to MATTHEW. Glowingly, to MATTHEW*) You did the clocks! How kind of you.

MATTHEW. (*Shyly*) It was Sarah's idea, Miss Janet.

JANET. She couldn't have done it alone! It was very brave of you!

MATTHEW. (*This praise undoes MATTHEW to such an extent that he takes off his glasses, and polishes them*) Not really! Did you have a pleasant afternoon?

JANET. (*Back Left end of sofa*) Very. But I hardly saw the tennis. (*Happily, as she is aware that she is about to explode a bomb*) Lawrence Peters was there!

MATTHEW. (*Head jerks up, and he looks at her blankly*) The political writer?

JANET. He's here! Visiting the Schuylers!

MATTHEW. (*In a hushed voice*) Did you meet him?

JANET. I spent most of the afternoon talking to him!

(*MATTHEW begins to rub his glasses violently.*)

He was amazed that I knew so much about conditions in England, so I told him about your thesis. And he wants to read it!

MATTHEW. Good Lord! (*Crosses up to JANET.*)

JANET. And *that's* not all! He wants to meet you. And we're to go over tonight, after dinner.

MATTHEW. (*Coming back to the real world*) We won't be able to, of course.

JANET. Why not? (*Bitterly*) The Schuylers are on the approved list! They are the sort of people one knows!

MATTHEW. But Lawrence Peters isn't.

JANET. No one knows he's in the country! He only landed this morning. I won't even mention him. I'll just say that the Schuylers want me to come over, and since Daddy doesn't like me to drive alone at night, you'll have to come with me!

MATTHEW. It might just possibly work! (*Puts glasses on.*)

JANET. It will! And he'll think you're wonderful.

MATTHEW. That's not very probable.

JANET. It's extremely probable! And he'll arrange to have your thesis published over there—

(*She breaks off as GRAHAM enters from the study and speaks in an agitated voice.*)

GRAHAM. Matthew! Run out to the kitchen, and tell Sarah that we'll need an extra cup and saucer!

MATTHEW. Yes, sir. (*Exits Center.*)

(*BILLY enters from terrace up Left.*)

JANET. What's the matter, Daddy?

GRAHAM. That ridiculous woman is in Lakeville, and she's coming out at once!

JANET. Oh, dear!

GRAHAM. Her letter said that she couldn't get here in time for dinner, and here she is, coming for tea!

BILLY. Well, we can't do anything about *her*! She's going to be late!

GRAHAM. (*Sits love seat*) Definitely! And this is only the beginning, mind you! She's to be here for at least a week!

BILLY. (*Crosses to Center*) Matthew and Sarah will be as busy as bird-dogs. By the end of the week, this house will be operating on Pacific Coast Time! By the way, who is the lady?

GRAHAM. Her name is Warburton. She's an artist, and I wish to heaven— (*Breaks off as MATTHEW returns, bearing extra tea cup and saucer.*)

MATTHEW. I thought I'd better bring them myself. (*Crosses to Left. He puts them on the tea table.*)

GRAHAM. Good boy! Thank you.

(*SARAH enters with silver tea service, places it on tea table.*)

Well, at least we're here!

BILLY. Yes, punctual to the minute! (*With assumed disapproval*) But where in the world is your mother?

MRS. COLBY. (*Has entered Center in time to hear this. She is an erect, forceful-looking woman, in the seventies. She pauses in the doorway, and speaks in a strong, clear voice*) Here!

(*They ALL turn to her, looking slightly guilty.*)

BILLY. Oh! Yes! Splendid! (*Crosses to up Left.*)

(*GRAHAM crosses Right for chair and places it stage Center. MRS. COLBY just glances at him, then moves majestically to the tea table and sits down. Immediately SARAH enters, and places a tea set in front of her. SARAH puts three lumps of sugar in tea for GRAHAM.*)

MRS. COLBY. (*As she pours*) The cups could be warmer.

SARAH. Yes, ma'am.

(*ALL sit except MATTHEW.*)

MRS. COLBY. For Mr. Colby. For Miss Janet.

(*SARAH crosses with cup to JANET and then with cup to GRAHAM.*)

How do you do take your tea, Mr. Gordon?

BILLY. Straight! Nothing in it, I mean. (*Sits chair Left.*)

MRS. COLBY. (*Filling another cup, and giving it to SARAH*) For Mr. Gordon.

(*SARAH gives him his tea, and MRS. COLBY fills another cup.*)

For Mr. Anderson.

(*SARAH crosses back of sofa and gives him his tea, and MRS. COLBY discovers that she still has two cups.*)

There is an extra cup.

(SARAH by end of sofa Left.)

GRAHAM. I meant to tell you, Mother. That woman will be here for tea.

MRS. COLBY. What woman?

GRAHAM. The artist. The one who's going to do my portrait. Mrs. Warburton.

MRS. COLBY. You told me that she wouldn't be here until after dinner.

GRAHAM. Yes, that's what her letter said. But she rang up from the village a few minutes ago, and she's on her way out now.

MRS. COLBY. Pass the bread and butter.

SARAH. Yes, ma'am. (*She passes the bread and butter.*)

(*There is a strained silence.*)

BILLY. I'm not very bright about Art, but I do read the *Times*, and I don't know that I've ever heard of a Mrs. Warburton.

GRAHAM. She paints under her maiden name— Constance Arrott!

BILLY. Oh, I have heard of her. So she's going to do you, is she?

GRAHAM. Yes, Randolph. My publisher commissioned it. He's decided to have a portrait of me in his new office. That makes me almost a classic, doesn't it?

(*He and BILLY smile.*)

MRS. COLBY. You may go, Sarah.

(SARAH puts bread and butter plate on Center table.)

If Mrs. Warburton is very late, you'll have to bring in fresh tea.

SARAH. Yes ma'am. (*Exits Center.*)

GRAHAM. That will hardly be necessary! She ought to be here in a few minutes.

MRS. COLBY. Unless she changes her mind, and does something else.

GRAHAM. There's no danger of that. She said she'd come straight out.

MRS. COLBY. She also said that she would not be here until after dinner.

GRAHAM. (*Frowning*) Yes, I know.

(*Another strained silence.*)

BILLY. Is Mrs. Warburton a very old friend?

GRAHAM. I've never even seen her. It was Randolph's idea that she should stay in the house while she was painting me. He thought she would be happier here than at the inn.

BILLY. Randolph's never visited you, has he?

GRAHAM. No, but he knew that we had ample room, so I couldn't refuse.

JANET. I'm glad you didn't, Daddy! It will be fun to have an artist in the house.

MRS. COLBY. I can't imagine why you think so. Your father is ready for more tea. Let me have his cup.

(*JANET brings her the cup, and MRS. COLBY continues, as she pours.*)

Artists are a very disagreeable class of people. (*She punctuates her next three words by dropping into the tea three lumps of sugar*) Irresponsible. Egotistical. Worthless.

(*JANET hands the cup to GRAHAM.*)

GRAHAM. (*Amused*) We must hope that Mrs. Warburton will be an exception.

MRS. COLBY. It's very unlikely. (*To MATTHEW*) Let me have Mr. Gordon's cup.

(*BILLY very reluctantly surrenders his cup to MATTHEW.*)

GRAHAM. Well, for Billy's sake, we must hope that the lady will be attractive.

BILLY. For my sake!

GRAHAM. Yes. You'll have to take care of her in the mornings, while I'm working.

BILLY. Don't count on it!

GRAHAM. What's the matter? Don't you like artists either?

BILLY. I do not. I especially dislike female artists. They always have square finger nails.

(JANET laughs. MRS. COLBY stops JANET's laugh with a stern look. MRS. COLBY hands cup to MATTHEW, who hands it to BILLY.)

Is there a Mr. Warburton?

GRAHAM. I haven't any idea.

MRS. COLBY. Her husband died ten years ago.

GRAHAM. How in the world would you know that?!

MRS. COLBY. I also read the *Times*.

JANET. Grandmother, I think that Matthew would like some more tea.

MRS. COLBY. Matthew?

JANET. (*Very embarrassed*) I mean, Mr. Anderson!

MRS. COLBY. Oh. (*She looks at MATTHEW as if he were almost out of sight*) Then let me have your cup, Mr. Anderson.

MATTHEW. (*In a very low voice*) Thank you. (*He brings the cup to her, and looks thoroughly unhappy as she fills it.*)

BILLY. (*Stirs uncomfortably in his chair, and looks at his watch*) I can't think why my sister hasn't telephoned! Here it is, almost twenty-five to five!

MRS. COLBY. (*Pausing with MATTHEW's cup in mid-air*) Surely it's later than that!

BILLY. (*Happily and strongly, after a fractional pause*) Not by my watch! I have exactly twenty-six minutes to five!

MRS. COLBY. Impossible! (*To MATTHEW*) What is the *correct* time, Mr. Anderson?

MATTHEW. I have twenty-seven to five.

MRS. COLBY. It's not of the slightest importance. I don't know why you're discussing it so gravely! (*She gives MATTHEW his cup*) Janet, more tea?

JANET. No, thank you, Grandmother.

(*SARAH is seen crossing the hall to answer the door.*)

MRS. COLBY. I suppose you've been drinking cokes all afternoon!

JANET. Not even one! But I sat with the Schuylers, and they were having iced tea, so I drank that.

MRS. COLBY. (*Looking at her very shrewdly*) Did the Schuylers have a guest with them?

JANET. (*Casually, after hesitating*) Yes. An Englishman. I believe he only landed this morning.

MRS. COLBY. (*With an edge to her voice*) I read in the *Times* that he was going to.

SARAH. (*Before JANET can reply, SARAH appears in the doorway*) Mrs. Warburton. (*SARAH stands aside as MRS. WARBURTON enters. SARAH takes MRS. WARBURTON'S cape and leaves.*)

(*CONSTANCE WARBURTON is a woman in the late thirties. She is extremely attractive, and as she has been aware of this for many years, it is a fact that no longer distracts her. She is therefore able to devote her full energy to liking, and being liked by, the scores of people whom she meets every year. As she enters the room, she is conscious that she is about to make five new friends. This happy thought animates her voice when she speaks. GRAHAM rises, crosses to desk and puts his cup and saucer on it. MATTHEW and BILLY rise hastily and she immediately comes down to GRAHAM to shake hands.*)

CONSTANCE. You're Mr. Colby, aren't you?

GRAHAM. (*Looking very pleased*) Yes!

CONSTANCE. (*At large*) You think I'm being intui-

tive, which is very modest of you. (*To GRAHAM*) I've seen at least a hundred photographs of you—including the one on your last dust-cover, for which someone ought to be sued! (*Again to the GROUP*) All the way out from New York I've been trying to think what to do about the double chin, and he hasn't got one!

BILLY. (*Enchanted*) No, of course he hasn't!

CONSTANCE. (*Smiles at him, then again addresses the OTHERS*) Now do go on with your tea! And forgive me for interrupting you!

GRAHAM. (*Also enchanted*) We'll do more than that. We'll give you some tea!

(*GRAHAM and CONSTANCE cross back of sofa.*)

CONSTANCE. That will be pleasant.

GRAHAM. But first, perhaps you'd like to know who these people are.

CONSTANCE. If you care to tell me.

GRAHAM. (*Gesturing to the appropriate individual*) My mother. My daughter Janet.

(*JANET rises.*)

Mr. Gordon. And my secretary, Matthew Anderson. (*GRAHAM crosses to Center.*)

(*CONSTANCE smiles at each of them, and is smiled at by everyone except MRS. COLBY, who merely inclines her head.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Standing, faces Left end of sofa. To MRS. COLBY*) Now may I explain why I came so early?

MRS. COLBY. Since you're here, it hardly matters. How will you take your tea?

(*For the shortest possible space of time, CONSTANCE entertains the thought that MRS. COLBY is being unpleasant. Then she realizes that MRS. COLBY is simply one of those people who are brusque until they have thawed out, and she smiles again.*)

CONSTANCE. Just black, please. May I sit here?
(*Sitting next to MRS. COLBY on sofa.*)

MRS. COLBY. The tea has been standing for some time. It may be too cold to drink.

(*She gives CONSTANCE the cup, and again, but very briefly CONSTANCE entertains a doubt about MRS. COLBY'S pleasantness.*)

CONSTANCE. I'm sure it won't be. (*She sits down*) In any case, I rather like cold tea!

BILLY. That's a very special taste!

CONSTANCE. It has to be cultivated. (*Having tried her tea*) Oh, this is lovely! (*She smiles at the GROUP*) In case you were all deeply concerned!

(*BILLY sits chair Left.*)

GRAHAM. (*Standing back of his chair*) We were. We have been holding our collective breath. (*He smiles at her.*)

CONSTANCE. The most wonderful things happen to your face when you smile! I wish I could paint you like that!

GRAHAM. (*Liking this very much*) Well, why can't you?

CONSTANCE. Oh, there's convention about it. Authors have to look sad.

BILLY. Even successful authors?

CONSTANCE. The more successful, the sadder! I'll paint Mr. Colby on the verge of tears!

(*EVERYONE except MRS. COLBY finds this amusing.*
GRAHAM sits chair Right of JANET.)

BILLY. Why do authors have to look sad?

(*MATTHEW brings down chair from up Left Center.*)

CONSTANCE. To show that they understand life! Bankers are allowed to look cheerful—that's to inspire confidence in their depositors, but never authors. It would ruin their sales!

GRAHAM. Then do be careful!

CONSTANCE. Trust me! (*She embraces them all in a warm smile which finally encounters MRS. COLBY's impassive face. CONSTANCE decides to hurry the thawing process*) I can't tell you how much I've been looking forward to this week!

(*MRS. COLBY says nothing, and CONSTANCE decides not to press the point, so she turns to the OTHERS.*)

When I was sweltering in Oklahoma last month, I kept thinking "Soon I'll be in Connecticut!" And here I am!

(*MATTHEW sits between BILLY and sofa.*)

BILLY. And a lucky thing for Connecticut! But what in the world were you doing in Oklahoma?

CONSTANCE. Painting a very prosperous oil man who had enormous ears!

BILLY. Do you go all over the country, painting people?

CONSTANCE. Relentlessly.

GRAHAM. Don't you get tired of it?

CONSTANCE. No, it's almost always fun. Occasionally I meet someone who's really unbearable, and then I wish that I had gone in for sign painting, but most people are adorable, once you get to know them. (*She turns to MRS. COLBY*) Could I have some more of this delicious tea?

MRS. COLBY. (*With no cordiality*) Certainly. (*She takes CONSTANCE's cup, empties the dregs into the slop bowl, fills it, and returns it to CONSTANCE without smiling.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Very sweetly*) Thank you.

JANET. (*Diffidently, as CONSTANCE sips her tea*) Mrs. Warburton, have you ever painted any university people?

CONSTANCE. A few presidents.

(JANET looks at MATTHEW. CONSTANCE catches their looks, then looks down at tea cup.)

JANET. I wonder if you know anyone at Wisconsin!

(MATTHEW rises.)

CONSTANCE. Wisconsin? No, I don't. Have you friends there?

JANET. (*Looking in cup*) No, but a friend of mine is hoping to teach there. This year! And if you did happen to know the president—!

CONSTANCE. Exactly! What a pity that I don't! But I might know someone else who could be useful. I'll try to think.

JANET. (*Glowingly*) It would be wonderful if you could! I'd be terribly grateful to you!

(*She looks across at MATTHEW, and CONSTANCE following her glance discovers that MATTHEW is looking at JANET with something very like adoration.*)

CONSTANCE. Nonsense! I like nothing better than to make use of my friends. It gives me a pleasant feeling of thrift!

(MATTHEW sits. *She now discovers that MRS. COLBY has also seen MATTHEW's look of adoration, and that she is registering grim disapproval.*)

I only regret that your friend isn't trying to get a job in Oklahoma. My oil man is so grateful to me for suppressing his ears, that I'm sure he'd go to any lengths to please me. (*She opens her bag.*)

GRAHAM. He would if he had a grain of sense!

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling happily at the GROUP*) I have a feeling that this is going to be one of my happiest weeks.

(*She produces a cigarette case. MRS. COLBY stares at it and CONSTANCE, misunderstanding, offers it to her.*)

GRAHAM. (*Crosses to back of table. Leaning forward anxiously*) Mrs. Warburton! I'm sorry, but we don't smoke in this room.

CONSTANCE. Oh, don't we? (*She looks about with a puzzled expression*) Is there oxygen, or something?

GRAHAM. (*Unhappily*) No, but Mother has a very sensitive throat, and smoke irritates it.

CONSTANCE. Oh, I see! (*Hurriedly retires the cigarette*) Do forgive me! I should have asked if it was all right.

MRS. COLBY. (*With a wintry smile*) No one does, nowadays.

CONSTANCE. I'm afraid that's true. We simply take it for granted that everyone smokes. (*With compassion*) It must be very difficult for you, in restaurants and so on.

MRS. COLBY. I never go to restaurants.

CONSTANCE. Not even in New York?!

MRS. COLBY. I haven't been in New York for fifteen years.

CONSTANCE. Good heavens! I always feel out of touch if I've been away for more than a month! And isn't that absurd! Because with radio, and television, no one is ever out of touch with anything.

BILLY. Ah, but you don't go in for television, do you, Graham?

GRAHAM. No, we haven't a set. (*Moves chair to down Right. Then crosses back to table.*)

CONSTANCE. Oh.

BILLY. You haven't a radio either, have you?

GRAHAM. No, we don't allow them in this house.

(He smiles at his mother, and CONSTANCE looks slowly from him to MRS. COLBY'S cold face.)

CONSTANCE. *(Taking a deep breath)* Well, they are a nuisance, sometimes. *(She is struck by a sudden thought)* What do you do for music?

GRAHAM. *(Smiling)* We have a record player. We make that much of a concession to modernity.

CONSTANCE. *(Also smiling)* That's a relief.

MRS. COLBY. Do you like classical music, Mrs. Warburton?

CONSTANCE. Yes, very much.

MRS. COLBY. Then you will enjoy our records. We have a very good collection.

CONSTANCE. Just of the classics, I suppose?

MRS. COLBY. Naturally.

GRAHAM. *(Crosses behind sofa to back of CONSTANCE)* I hope you're not going to find it dull here!

CONSTANCE. I'm sure I won't! It's going to be beautiful, and restful, and it's very kind of you to have me! *(She ends this by smiling at MRS. COLBY.)*

MRS. COLBY. *(Coldly)* Not at all.

CONSTANCE. But I did make a bad beginning, by coming so early!

MRS. COLBY. *(Still coldly)* It's of no moment.

CONSTANCE. *(Now decides that MRS. COLBY is a thoroughly disagreeable old party, and she stops smiling)* You're very gracious! *(Pleasantly to the OTHERS)* Now if you've all arranged to go to a dinner party, you must simply pretend that I'm not here and go!

GRAHAM. I can't even remember when I last went to a dinner party. *(Crosses back of JANET)* Janet is the only social member of our household. We rarely have a glimpse of her.

MRS. COLBY. Too rarely. I hope you haven't made any plans for tonight, Janet.

JANET. Yes, I have, Grandmother. I've promised to go to the *Schuylers* after dinner.

GRAHAM. That's such a long drive! And I don't like you to be alone on the roads at night.

JANET. It's perfectly safe, Daddy. (*Very casually*) But if you'd feel better about it, perhaps Mr. Anderson would go over with me.

GRAHAM. Yes, that's a happy thought. Would that be agreeable to you, Matthew?

MATTHEW. (*Rises*) Perfectly, sir.

JANET. (*Beaming*) Good. Then that's settled!

MRS. COLBY. Is it? And who is to take Sarah to church?

JANET. (*Looking stricken*) Sarah!

MRS. COLBY. You know how she looks forward to the Sunday evening service! And I think she deserves some consideration! She works very hard to make us all comfortable!

(MATTHEW moves his chair up Left Center.)

JANET. (*Sounding broken-hearted*) Of course she does. I simply forgot about the evening service.

GRAHAM. So did I. I'm sorry. You'd better call Mrs. Schuyler, and tell her that you can't come.

JANET. (*Nods miserably*) I will.

CONSTANCE. (*Strongly*) Is there any reason why Sarah can't come to church with me?

(ALL turn to her in astonishment.)

I always go to evening services. I love them!

GRAHAM. (*Smiling*) It's very kind of you, but I think I ought to warn you that Sarah's minister is capable of talking for an hour.

CONSTANCE. Good!

MRS. COLBY. And after the service, there is an adult Sunday School Class. You will hardly wish to attend that.

CONSTANCE. Why not? I love Sunday School! As a matter of fact, I used to teach it!

MRS. COLBY. (*With insulting incredulity*) You taught Sunday School? Where?

CONSTANCE. At Sing Sing!

(*BILLY laughs. PHONE rings. He rises, crosses to back of sofa.*)

MATTHEW. (*Lifting the receiver*) Colbys' residence. —Who? Just a minute, please. (*Turning*) It's for you, Mr. Gordon.

BILLY. Thank you. (*He takes the receiver from MATTHEW*) Hello— Yes, this is he— Hello, Sis.

(*MATTHEW exits into study. JANET puts bread and butter plate on tea table and her own cup, then crosses to mantel. Takes MATTHEW'S cup to tea table.*)

(*Enthusiastically, after listening*) That's splendid!—I said, that's splendid— It's a great relief that Pete's all right— No, I wouldn't want to leave here one minute before I had to. (*Listens and chuckles*) I think you'd like her— I'll try to do it. It's the best news I've had in weeks— Thank you for calling— Goodbye. (*Hangs up*) My sister just wanted to tell me that her husband's all right. We were a little worried about him yesterday.

GRAHAM. (*Sits chair Left*) Yes, you said he hadn't been well.

BILLY. Evidently just one of those things. (*Crosses up Left Center.*)

JANET. (*Looking troubled*) Well, Grandmother, is it all right about tonight?

MRS. COLBY. Perfectly, since Mrs. Warburton is so eager to attend the service.

CONSTANCE. I can hardly wait. (*Sweetly as she is feeling remorseful.*)

MRS. COLBY. You are more than kind. (*Rises*) Janet, you will take Mrs. Warburton to her room, when she is ready to go upstairs.

JANET. Yes, Grandmother.

MRS. COLBY (*Crosses to down Left. To CONSTANCE*)

We dine at seven, but we gather here for a glass of sherry at a quarter to seven. On the dot, Mrs. Warburton!

CONSTANCE. (*In a rather subdued voice*) Thank you.

(MRS. COLBY *slightly inclines her head, then goes majestically out through the French windows.*

CONSTANCE *crosses to Left.* MATTHEW *crosses to desk.* GRAHAM *crosses back of sofa to end.*)

(CONSTANCE *watches MRS. COLBY exit, then speaks in a voice of awe*) What's she going to do now?

GRAHAM. (*Left end of sofa*) Walk in the garden. She always does at this time.

CONSTANCE (*Crosses to GRAHAM*) What if it rains?

GRAHAM. It doesn't usually rain if Mother wants to walk in the garden.

CONSTANCE. No, of course it wouldn't!

(JANET *crosses up Right to bookcase.*)

GRAHAM. (*Seriously*) But it's very well worth seeing. Do you like flowers?

CONSTANCE. On the whole.

(MATTHEW *enters from study, and sits at desk.*)

GRAHAM. I really think you might enjoy Mother's. Would it bore you to look at them?

CONSTANCE. Do I have to make comments?

GRAHAM. No.

CONSTANCE. Then I'd love to.

BILLY. (*Crosses down to tea table*) Good!

GRAHAM. (*He and BILLY rise together, and GRAHAM frowns*) I thought you had had enough of the garden today, Billy.

BILLY. Never! But there's no reason why you should go out, Graham. You've got all those letters to sign, and I haven't a thing to do.

GRAHAM. The letters can wait! (*Turns to MATTHEW*) Or can they, Matthew?

MATTHEW (*Back of desk*) You wanted them to go off today, and the mail closes at five-thirty.

GRAHAM. Damn!

BILLY. Don't give it another thought! You take care of your letters, and I'll take care of Mrs. Warburton!

GRAHAM. That's very unsatisfactory!

CONSTANCE. Of course it is! Go in and sign your letters, and we'll wait for you.

GRAHAM. Fair enough! (*To Center, starts towards the study, then stops, looking suspiciously at BILLY*) And you will wait?

BILLY. On my honor! (*Crosses his heart.*)

GRAHAM. (*Sounding unconvinced*) I suppose that's binding. (*He goes into the study.*)

BILLY. (*Crosses to Center. To CONSTANCE, as the door closes behind GRAHAM*) Is your luggage still in the car?

CONSTANCE. Yes, it is.

BILLY. Then I'm sure that Matthew is eager to bring it in for you.

MATTHEW. I am indeed.

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to BILLY*) That's very sweet of you. I'll come and help.

BILLY. Totally unnecessary. Just give Janet your keys, and she'll manage everything.

(*JANET crosses to BILLY.*)

CONSTANCE. Not at all! I'll go out myself.

BILLY. You're making Janet very unhappy. Isn't she, Janet?

JANET. Very!

BILLY. You see! She's dying to be of service to you!

CONSTANCE. Well, this seems very luxurious. (*She opens her bag.*)

BILLY. It's simply efficient! If everyone just does something, everything gets done quite easily.

CONSTANCE. And what do you do?

BILLY. I make plans.

(CONSTANCE produces two keys on a chain and BILLY takes them, gives them to JANET.)
Here are the keys, Janet. Now run along, Matthew.

(MATTHEW and JANET go out Center.)

BILLY. That's that! (BILLY sees them out into the hall; as SARAH enters for tea table, BILLY takes Graham's cup and saucer from desk and places them on tea table, as SARAH wheels table out Center.)

CONSTANCE. (Sits sofa) Can I help?

SARAH. No, thank you, Mrs. Warburton.

BILLY. (Crosses to sofa) Now I have a message for you from my sister.

CONSTANCE. Do I know your sister?

BILLY. Not yet. But she's very anxious to meet you. She'd like me to bring you for dinner one night next week.

CONSTANCE. Did she send a carrier pigeon with a message?

BILLY. (Sits on sofa) No, she told me on the telephone just now. When I told her that I didn't want to leave, she realized that something pleasant had turned up in the last half hour. And being rather bright, she guessed what kind of thing it was.

(CONSTANCE is amused.)

You see, I rang her up a little while ago to ask her to get me out of this.

CONSTANCE. Oh, that's the sort of person you are!

BILLY. What do you mean?

CONSTANCE. You were going to run away.

BILLY. As fast as my little legs would carry me!

(CONSTANCE takes out her cigarette case.)

You don't know what it's like here!

CONSTANCE. Well, I have some idea! (She starts to light a cigarette.)

BILLY. Tut! Tut! Tut! You can't smoke in here!

CONSTANCE. But she's gone!

BILLY. That doesn't matter. You're only allowed to smoke in your own room, or outside.

CONSTANCE. I don't believe it!

BILLY. Then ask Graham! He'll tell you! But that's nothing! They beat a gong, right in your ear, every day at twenty-seven minutes past four!

CONSTANCE. (*In a fascinated whisper*) Why?

BILLY. To warn you that tea will be ready in three minutes, and Heaven help you if you're late!

CONSTANCE. (*Making a gesture of horror*) I was. (*Closing case.*)

BILLY. You're telling me! Matthew was at his wits end! That poor boy! The old lady treats him like dirt! I don't know why he puts up with it. He said there were compensations, but God knows what they are.

CONSTANCE. God and I.

BILLY. What?

CONSTANCE. Nothing. Go on!

BILLY. All right! Do you drink?

CONSTANCE. Naturally.

BILLY. (*Triumphantly*) Not in this house! No alcohol allowed on the premises.

CONSTANCE. (*Pointing to the windows*) But she said we'd have sherry!

BILLY. She said a glass of sherry, and that's what she meant! They give it to you in the sort of glass we used for liqueurs at my club until the members complained.

CONSTANCE. How far is it to the nearest bar?

BILLY. It's not within walking distance, and I came on the train!

CONSTANCE. You've really suffered.

BILLY. But I've only been here since last night. Think of Graham! He's spent most of his life with her.

CONSTANCE. It's his own fault, of course; he shouldn't be weak.

BILLY. It's not that. He's grateful to her. When he

was a boy, she did without things to pay for his education.

CONSTANCE. What did she do without?

BILLY. He didn't say.

CONSTANCE. Probably cigars!

BILLY. Probably.

CONSTANCE. (*Briskly*) Well, we can't shoot her, so we'll have to make him assert his rights.

BILLY. I don't think I'd enjoy that.

CONSTANCE. You don't propose to sit back and do nothing, I hope!

BILLY. That was my idea. I'm a peaceful man. I don't get embroiled in things.

CONSTANCE. (*Rises*) That's exactly what's wrong with the world! All the nice people don't get embroiled in things, so all the horrible ones get away with murder.

BILLY. That pleases me!

CONSTANCE. What?

BILLY. You referred to me as "nice people."

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses down Left*) I use that term very loosely! Now what we've got to do—

BILLY. (*Unhappily*) We are going to do something, are we?

CONSTANCE. *Certainly!* We can't let a domineering old woman ruin three—

BILLY. Be careful! What if she heard you!

CONSTANCE. She probably will, before I leave!

BILLY. You are magnificent!

(*This sudden change of pace startles CONSTANCE.*) You see I'm a rather timid person myself, so I always admire courage in other people. (*Rises. Crosses to CONSTANCE*) Especially when it's combined with great beauty. You will let me see you in New York, won't you?

CONSTANCE. (*Picks up gloves and bag from sofa, puts them on table Center*) Yes, why not?

BILLY. I had hoped for a little more enthusiasm, but that can come later. And it probably will. I've noticed it before. I'm a slow starter.

CONSTANCE. (*Sits chair Center*) I wouldn't have guessed that.

BILLY. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE*) Wouldn't you? Did you like me the moment you saw me? If you did, it's quite unusual. Most people don't even see me the first time they look at me.

(*Breaks off as JANET returns up Center Right.*)
Oh, damn it! What's the matter, Janet?

JANET. (*Stands Right Center*) Nothing.

BILLY. (*Crosses to JANET*) I thought you were going to bring in the luggage?

JANET. We did.

BILLY. Well, don't just leave it sitting in the hall, for heaven's sake! Tell Matthew to take it up to Mrs. Warburton's room.

JANET. (*Smiling*) We did take it up to Mrs. Warburton's room.

BILLY. Oh. Well, you needn't have tried to break a record. Your lives didn't depend on getting it there in ten seconds!

JANET. (*Increasingly amused*) We can take it back, if you like. Matthew's turning the car around, but he'll be here in a minute. (*Crosses down to desk and sits.*)

BILLY. Then you could unpack! (*To CONSTANCE*) Don't you want them to take out a few of your dresses, and hang them up? They'll get frightfully wrinkled.

CONSTANCE. I think they'll be all right. (*Rises. Crosses to BILLY*) But there is something I'd like.

BILLY. Good!

CONSTANCE. If you don't mind going out to the car.

BILLY. (*Looking depressed*) I hadn't thought of going myself.

CONSTANCE. But you see, I brought you a present!

BILLY. You brought me a present?!

CONSTANCE. Well— I thought I was bringing it to my host, but it's something you'll like very much, and you'll find it in the glove compartment.

BILLY. What is it?

CONSTANCE. Haig and Haig.

BILLY. Good Lord! (*Then, looking troubled*) What'll I do with it?

CONSTANCE. I didn't know that would be a problem.

BILLY. I mean, where would I do it?

CONSTANCE. Perhaps in your room?

BILLY. Yes. (*Looking very happy, he turns toward the door, but stops at once*) No! (*Firmly*) It can wait.

CONSTANCE. Why?

BILLY. I couldn't bear to miss a tour of the garden!

CONSTANCE. You don't need to. But I thought you might like a little one before we went out.

BILLY. (*Starts upstage*) That definitely has merit. Tell Graham to wait!

CONSTANCE. On my honor. (*Crosses her heart.*)

(*BILLY exits up Center to Right.*)

JANET. (*Rises from behind desk*) Mr. Gordon is a very amusing man, isn't he?

CONSTANCE. (*Sits love seat*) Yes, very.

JANET. (*Crossing to down stage end of love seat*) I had never met him until last night, and yet I feel as if I had known him for a long time.

CONSTANCE. I don't wonder. He begins in the middle!

(*They smile at each other.*)

JANET. (*Shyly*) It was very good of you to make it all right about tonight. I can't tell you how important it is!

CONSTANCE. You don't need to. I saw how important it was!

JANET. (*Anxiously*) Do you think anyone else did?

CONSTANCE. Does it matter?

JANET. Yes, very much!

CONSTANCE. If I were you, I wouldn't worry. I'd just be happy. That's the chief duty of anyone who is twenty.

JANET. (*Crosses back of desk*) I've heard a lot about duty in my day, but I never heard that.

CONSTANCE. It's true, nevertheless.

MATTHEW. (*Enters up Center Right. Comes down to CONSTANCE*) Here are your keys, Mrs. Warburton.

CONSTANCE. (*Taking them*) Thank you very much.

MATTHEW. Mr. Gordon asked me to tell you that he found the package, and that he'll be down soon after he opens it.

CONSTANCE. Not very soon, I imagine! Didn't he ask you to open the package with him?

MATTHEW. No.

CONSTANCE. That shows a rather ugly nature!

(*GRAHAM appears in the study doorway, frowning. JANET turns up stage.*)

GRAHAM. (*In study door*) Matthew I need your help for a minute with this Jackson letter.

MATTHEW. Of course!

GRAHAM. He saves my life ten times a day!

(*He smiles at MATTHEW and they exit Right, into the study, closing the door behind them.*)

CONSTANCE. (*As soon as the door is closed*) Matthew seems to be a very nice boy.

JANET. (*After a fractional pause; crosses down to love seat*) Yes. Daddy says that he's the best secretary he's ever had.

CONSTANCE. I can believe that. He looks very intelligent. What is he going to teach at Wisconsin?

(*JANET looks frightened.*)

It is Matthew that you're interested in, isn't it?

JANET. (*Sits love seat. Whispering*) Yes. But that's a secret!

CONSTANCE. Is it? Why?

JANET. Well, you see— (*Bitterly*) He's just a secretary, so I'm not supposed to know that he exists!

CONSTANCE. Oh, we look down on secretaries, do we?

JANET. From a great height! (*With heat*) The fact that he was decorated during the war, and has a Ph.D. from Harvard, doesn't matter! He's beneath me!

CONSTANCE. So you have to take him to the Schuylers to see him!

JANET. Oh, no, that isn't it! The Schuylers have a guest—an Englishman whom Matthew would like to meet. That's why I want to take him there. But I *never* try to have dates with Matthew!

CONSTANCE. Why don't you?

JANET. What good would it do?

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling*) Doesn't it "do good" to see someone that you're in love with?

JANET. I didn't say that I was in love with Matthew.

CONSTANCE. But you are, aren't you?

JANET. (*After hesitating*) Yes.

CONSTANCE. And he's certainly in love with you!

JANET. (*Again hesitating*) That's just the trouble. He isn't.

CONSTANCE. How do you know?

JANET. Well, lots of people have been.

CONSTANCE. I should think so.

JANET. And Matthew doesn't act the way they do.

CONSTANCE. (*Strongly*) How could he, in this house?

JANET. He could. We talk together every morning. He's had a wonderful life! He's worked since he was a little boy. He had to. They were very poor. Just think! His mother was a laundress!

CONSTANCE. Does your grandmother know that?!

JANET. Yes. He told Grandmother and Daddy the first night he was here.

CONSTANCE. That must have been quite a moment. I'm sorry I missed it. (*Thinks*) Your father seems to like Matthew.

JANET. Yes, he does.

CONSTANCE. That's some help, isn't it?

JANET. Not very much.

CONSTANCE. No, I see that. Well, you'll just have to marry him, and then say you've done it!

JANET. (*Rises, crosses up Center*) Marry Matthew! How did you know I wanted to?

CONSTANCE. It isn't unusual for a girl to want to marry the boy she's in love with.

JANET. Oh.

CONSTANCE. And I hadn't been in this room five minutes before you asked me if I could be helpful about Matthew's job!

JANET. (*Moves to CONSTANCE*) Was that horrible of me?

CONSTANCE. I thought it was very sweet. And just the sort of thing I used to do, when I was hoping to marry a poor man.

JANET. Did you? Marry him, I mean?

CONSTANCE. Yes.

JANET. Were you happy?

CONSTANCE. Indescribably.

JANET. (*With compassion*) And then he died!

CONSTANCE. Yes.

JANET. (*Crosses to Center*) If Matthew died, I don't think I'd want to go on living!

CONSTANCE. If you were as lucky as I was, you'd want to very much.

JANET. Why?

CONSTANCE. Because you'd have his children to work for. And ten years of happiness behind you. If you have the memory of happiness life can't do anything to you. You're safe.

JANET. (*For a moment, JANET looks exalted. Then her expression darkens*) I shall never be happy.

(CONSTANCE takes JANET'S hand, moves down to love seat to permit JANET to sit down.)

CONSTANCE. Aren't you a little young to give up?

JANET. I'd never be allowed to marry Matthew.

CONSTANCE. Probably not. I wasn't allowed to marry

Arthur. And I almost didn't. But just before it was too late, I decided to be sensible.

JANET. What did you do?

CONSTANCE. We got married. And a few weeks later, we told the family.

JANET. Was there an explosion?

CONSTANCE. No. Once you're married, there's exactly nothing that anyone can do about it.

JANET. You know, this is funny!

CONSTANCE. What?

JANET. We're wondering whether I ought to marry Matthew.

CONSTANCE. I'm not wondering!

JANET. No, you're all ready to get the license!

CONSTANCE. That's something you'll have to do yourself!

JANET. Won't I need Matthew's consent?

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling*) I think you might get it!

JANET. (*Shakes her head*) Shall I tell you something? I have no appeal for him! And that's very embarrassing, because he has so much for me! I keep wanting him to kiss me, and he's never even tried to hold my hand!

CONSTANCE. He's a nice, self-respecting boy.

JANET. I've known other self-respecting boys, and they all wanted to kiss me!

CONSTANCE. They weren't working for your father, and their mothers weren't laundresses, and they weren't afraid that you'd think they were fortune hunters if they made love to you.

JANET. (*Thinks this over, and her face brightens*) If that's all it is. I can do something about it!

CONSTANCE. Easily.

JANET. If only he weren't shy!

CONSTANCE. My own, very limited experience gave me the idea that the shy ones manage beautifully, once they're started.

JANET. Perhaps if I—

(*Breaks off as GRAHAM enters Right. JANET rises.*)

GRAHAM. (*By door*) Now I'm free at last! Has Janet been taking good care of you?

CONSTANCE. Very.

GRAHAM. What have you been talking about?

CONSTANCE. Secrets. We're on those terms already. (*Rises. Crosses to front of sofa—takes bag from table*) But now I'm anxious to go into the garden. And I'm sure that Janet will enjoy a few minutes of absolute freedom. (*She just glances at JANET, then turns to GRAHAM.*)

GRAHAM. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE*) Where's Billy?

CONSTANCE. He went up to his room for something. He wanted us to wait, but I don't think we need to.

GRAHAM. (*Very pleased*) I agree with you! Do take my arm. (*Crosses toward Left*) The path is rather uneven.

CONSTANCE. Thank you.

(*She smiles at him, puts her hands through his arm, and they go out down Left together. JANET hesitates a moment, then crosses to study, knocks and returns to chair Center and sits. MATTHEW enters, carrying a dozen or more letters to be mailed.*)

JANET. Hello.

MATTHEW. Hello! (*Crosses back of desk. He smiles at her, then frowns and looks down at his letters*) Is there anything I could do for you in the village? (*Crosses to up Center*) I'm going in to mail these.

JANET. You needn't hurry. And I want to talk to you.

MATTHEW. (*Looking apprehensive*) Now?

JANET. It's all right. They're in the garden.

MATTHEW. (*Crosses down to Center table*) Oh. Yes.

(*A little pause.*)

JANET. (*Rises. Crosses to MATTHEW*) Will you tell me the truth, if I ask you a question?

MATTHEW. Certainly!

JANET. It's a rather embarrassing question, and you might be tempted to lie.

MATTHEW. All right. I'll conquer the temptation.

JANET. (*Moves to MATTHEW. Slowly*) Well, then, do you like me?

MATTHEW. (*Having discarded several longer replies*) Yes.

JANET. Of course you do! We're friends! But what I really mean is, do you like me a great deal?

MATTHEW. (*Stolidly*) Yes, a great deal.

JANET. That's lucky. For *me*. Because— I don't know whether you've noticed it, but I do love you very much.

(MATTHEW *takes out a handkerchief, removes his glasses, and begins to polish them very deliberately. He crosses Left back of sofa. After a moment, he speaks:*)

MATTHEW. (*Diffidently*) When I first came here, when I first met you, that is, I used to lie awake at night imagining that I would sometime hear you say— what you have just said. (*Puts glasses back in pocket.*)

JANET. (*Crosses of sofa to MATTHEW*) Oh, Matthew, how wonderful!

MATTHEW. But I soon realized that if you did happen to fall in love with me, it would be a tragedy for you.

JANET. (*Radiantly*) Not a great tragedy, I think.

MATTHEW. A very great tragedy. And so I made certain resolutions, which I have kept to. (*Picks up letters from Center table*) And I shall keep to them. (*Crosses up Center*) Now I must go to the Post Office.

JANET. (*Crosses to Center*) It won't do any good, because you'll have to come back, and I'll still be here.

MATTHEW. (*Crosses down to JANET, looking embarrassed*) Yes.

JANET. Are you sorry? Would you like me to go

away? Would you really be happy if you were never going to see me again?

(He looks at her, then looks away.)

If I knew that I'd never see you again, I'd think that the world was very empty. Isn't it that way with you? Are men so different that they can be in love, and think of love and the world as two separate things? But then, of course, you've never said that you were in love with me!

(MATTHEW is increasingly agitated.)

Perhaps you're just being polite, and kind! Is that it? Are you being kind to me, because I've made a fool of myself?

(MATTHEW shakes his head.)

In any case, it's all right. I'm not ashamed of loving you.

MATTHEW. The hell with it. *(He flings down the letters that he has been holding, crosses to her, takes her in his arms, and kisses her)* This is better!

JANET. Much better!

MATTHEW. Now sit down! *(He leads JANET to love seat)* I want to talk to you!

(She sits down, and he kneels at her feet.)

We can't go back now. You realize that, don't you?

JANET. *(Happily)* Oh, yes!

MATTHEW. Very well, then. We'll make our plans—*(Sits next to JANET)* In a minute! *(He presses the inside of her hand against his lips.)*

JANET. You do love me!

MATTHEW. There's never been a moment when I didn't. It's the only perfect score I ever made! When you came in here that afternoon—

JANET. I was very hot! I had been playing tennis!

MATTHEW. I know. You had little wet curls all over here!

JANET. How revolting!

MATTHEW. They were sweet! I wanted to kiss them!

JANET. Well, why didn't you?! Then we wouldn't

have wasted so much time! Has it made you happy to love me?

MATTHEW. Never, until now. Because I had no hope.

JANET. How silly you are! I pretended not to, but I always knew that I was going to marry you.

MATTHEW. That's what we must talk about!

JANET. You're not going to make any difficulty about it, are you?

MATTHEW. I don't need to. The difficulty is there already.

JANET. We love each other! That wipes away every problem!

MATTHEW. Yes! But there are details that we have to think about.

JANET. I've thought about them, dear. Everything is arranged.

MATTHEW. That's interesting. Especially as I have exactly sixty-six dollars in the world!

JANET. A license can't be nearly that much.

MATTHEW. A license?

JANET. Yes, dear. The first step, in these matters, is to get a marriage license.

MATTHEW. (*Rises*) The first step is for me to tell your father, and your grandmother, that I'm going to marry you!

JANET. You look very handsome at this moment! But don't be silly, darling. They'd never allow me to marry you, so don't bother asking them!

MATTHEW. I have no intention of asking them. But I shall tell them!

JANET. It's such a wonderful combination! (*Rises*) Shyness and courage. You don't expect to find them together. It's very arresting.

MATTHEW. This isn't what we were talking about.

JANET. (*Embracing MATTHEW*) I have a lovely feeling that you'll be saying that often in the next fifty years!

MATTHEW. Janet, we've got to settle this! Your father must be told the truth.

JANET. Matthew, we can't have a scene now, with Mrs. Warburton and Mr. Gordon in the house! It would be too embarrassing!

MATTHEW. Perhaps he wouldn't make a scene, while they're here!

JANET. Of course he would! He'd begin to shout before you had finished telling him.

MATTHEW. All right, let him!

JANET. It upsets Grandmother when he is angry.

MATTHEW. He'll be angry eventually in any case!

JANET. It's not certain! Mrs. Warburton told me that when she was— (*Breaks off*) Matthew, if you want to kiss me, there's just time! They're coming up the path.
(*He kisses her.*)

Now the letters!

MATTHEW. I don't know what good it will do to wait!

JANET. Darling, we can discuss the whole thing on the way to the Schuylers! Now rush! Please!

MATTHEW. (*Takes the letters and goes up to doors. From Center door*) I love you! (*He kisses her quickly, and hurries from the room up Center.*)

JANET. (*Flinging out her arms in a wide gesture of ecstasy*) Oh!

(*At this moment GRAHAM and CONSTANCE enter through the French windows. GRAHAM looks startled, but CONSTANCE smiles.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Left*) What does that mean, Janet?

JANET. (*Turning to her quickly*) That I am very happy!

GRAHAM. About anything in particular?

CONSTANCE. Just life, I imagine! (*Crosses above sofa to JANET*) Isn't that it, Janet?

JANET. (*With relief*) Yes, just life. (*Eagerly*) If you're ready to go upstairs now, I'll take you to your room.

GRAHAM. There's ample time! You run along, Janet.

I'll take Mrs. Warburton up when she's ready to go.

JANET. (*Looking disappointed*) Oh, all right. (*She turns to go, then impulsively turns back*) I can't tell you how glad I am that you came to visit us!

CONSTANCE. I'm very glad I did!

(*She and JANET smile at each other, and JANET goes off. CONSTANCE crosses down, sits chair Center.*)

GRAHAM. And so am I! (*He says this with such ringing sincerity that CONSTANCE turns to him quickly. He crosses to front of sofa*) I hadn't realized it, but I was beginning to find life rather dull.

CONSTANCE. Oh, that must stop at once!

GRAHAM. It stopped as you came through that door!

CONSTANCE. That's very gratifying!

GRAHAM. It was to me. You see, I had been dreading your visit.

CONSTANCE. That isn't gratifying!

(*They smile.*)

GRAHAM. The prospect of a female guest was rather appalling.

CONSTANCE. Oh, you thought I'd be underfoot!

GRAHAM. Yes. That's why I invited Billy to visit me this week.

CONSTANCE. So that we could take each other off your hands?

GRAHAM. (*Sits sofa*) Yes. Now my great fear is that you will!

(*CONSTANCE laughs, and he looks at her closely.*) Billy's a very attractive fellow, isn't he?

CONSTANCE. Very. I like him enormously.

GRAHAM. (*Looking depressed*) I was sure you would.

CONSTANCE. *Certainly!* We're the same kind of people! We both have very comfortable, low tastes!

GRAHAM. (*Having thought this over*) You both smoke, for instance.

CONSTANCE. We have even lower tastes, but we do smoke. I take it that you don't?

GRAHAM. No.

CONSTANCE. That makes it easier for you.

GRAHAM. Is it a great hardship for you not to be able to smoke in here?

CONSTANCE. It's not even worth thinking about!

GRAHAM. Anything that affects your comfort is worth thinking about!

CONSTANCE. How sweet of you! But you mustn't worry. I'm looking forward to this week. It's going to be very good for me.

GRAHAM. Like a week in a sanitarium?

CONSTANCE. Oh, it's not nearly that bad!

(This does not cheer GRAHAM.)

And anyway, it's only for a week!

(Neither does this.)

And I have my car! Billy and I can escape for a few hours whenever we want to!

GRAHAM. *(Rises, crosses to Center)* No, by heaven!

(CONSTANCE looks at him in surprise.)

Would you like a cigarette now?

CONSTANCE. Certainly not! Your mother might come in at any moment!

GRAHAM. She probably will!

CONSTANCE. Then I wouldn't dream of it. If she has a delicate throat!

GRAHAM. She hasn't. I invented that to save us all embarrassment!

CONSTANCE. Oh, really. Still it might annoy her.

GRAHAM. It's my house, after all!

CONSTANCE. I don't actually want a cigarette at this minute!

GRAHAM. You would be doing me a favor if you took one!

(He says this with such firmness that CONSTANCE smiles.)

CONSTANCE. (*Rises*) Then I shall, of course. (*She takes out her cigarette case and a box of matches.*)

GRAHAM. Let me light it for you.

CONSTANCE. I *am* going to paint you smiling! I don't care what happens to your sales!

(*She gives him the matches, and he strikes one. At this moment MRS. COLBY enters down Left, and speaks in a strong voice from the windows.*)

MRS. COLBY. Graham! What are you doing?!

CONSTANCE. (*Sweetly, but very happily*) He's lighting my cigarette! (*He is lighting it as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

SCENE: *The same. Center doors are closed.*

TIME: *The following Saturday morning.*

An easel, holding the portrait of GRAHAM, is placed up Left Center; a box of paints and cloth on Queen Anne chair up Left Center.

When the Curtain rises, MATTHEW and JANET are alone on the stage. MATTHEW is reading the concluding paragraph of a letter that is evidently dispiriting. JANET is seated on love seat. MATTHEW is standing back of desk.

MATTHEW. "Should you be interested in a temporary post, we can make you a definite offer for the academic year beginning September, 1954,"

(JANET and MATTHEW exchange a glance.)

"as Mr. Wilkins will then be absent on leave. However, your high qualifications, which make us regret that we had filled the vacancy in our Political Science Department before your name was suggested to us, make it improbable that you will still be available at that date. Very sincerely yours." *(Puts letter down on desk.)*

JANET. So that's out.

MATTHEW. Yes.

JANET. *(Hopefully, after a silence)* What about another college? Even a little, unimportant one?

MATTHEW. Even little, unimportant ones engage their people before the beginning of September.

JANET. But maybe someone else will die! If it happened at Wisconsin, it could happen anywhere!

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to upstage end of love seat*) It could, but most professors don't die until ten years after they've retired. (*Another silence*) If I'm as bright as I claim to be, I ought to be able to think of some way of earning money for one year!

JANET. For one year! What about the other forty-nine?

MATTHEW. They'll take care of themselves. I won't have any trouble getting a post next September. (*Moves away to Center table*) But what *can* I do in the meantime!

JANET. Couldn't you stay here?

MATTHEW. For approximately ten minutes after I've broken the news to your family.

JANET. Mrs. Warburton said—

MATTHEW. Yes, I know. But from what she's told me, I gather that her family was normal.

JANET. You don't hold mine against me, do you?

MATTHEW. How could I? It produced you.

JANET. (*Rises. Crosses to MATTHEW*) Perhaps you'd like to take off your glasses.

MATTHEW. I think I would. (*He takes them off, and puts them on Center table. Then he takes JANET in his arms and kisses her. After a moment, he draws her head down on his shoulder*) This always seems to simplify everything, but we must remember that it doesn't!

JANET. You remember it. I'm busy!

MATTHEW. (*He smiles, and presses his lips against her hair*) I could probably get a job in a filling station.

JANET. Could you earn enough to support us?

MATTHEW. The trouble is you can't get started without a little capital. We'd need so many things at first.

JANET. We both have enough clothes to last for a year, so we wouldn't need to buy anything except food!

MATTHEW. Not furniture? Or linen? Or china? Or pots and pans?

JANET. Oh, dear. (*Crosses to love seat*) Why don't we hire out as a couple?!

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to JANET*) That's a very good idea. Can you cook?

JANET. No. (*Sits.*)

MATTHEW. Neither can I. (*Crosses down to Center.*)

JANET. We'll have to think of something else.

MATTHEW. Yes.

JANET. But while we're thinking, you'd better stay on with Father.

MATTHEW. How can I?

JANET. We'll simply not tell them!

MATTHEW. That wouldn't be decent.

JANET. Why not?

MATTHEW. I couldn't go on eating their food!

JANET. God knows you earn it!

MATTHEW. That's true.

JANET. And there's no alternative, is there?

MATTHEW. I could go away, and send for you when I had earned enough to take decent care of you.

JANET. (*Rises, crosses to MATTHEW*) You wouldn't leave me!

MATTHEW. I couldn't! (*Takes her in his arms*) Not now!

JANET. Not ever!

MATTHEW. No, not ever.

JANET. (*After a moment*) I'll ask Mrs. Warburton what to do. I tried to talk to her this morning, but I couldn't. She was never alone! (*Amused*) It's terribly funny! Daddy stays at the breakfast table later every morning, hoping to get a moment alone with Mrs. Warburton, but Grandmother never budes until Mr. Gordon comes down. And once he appears, there's no hope for anyone. But I always have a few minutes with Mrs. Warburton while she's getting ready for dinner, and then I'll tell her that—

MATTHEW. Quick! Your Grandmother's coming! (*He kisses her quickly*) Goodbye, dearest!

JANET. Goodbye.

(He hurries into the study, closing the door behind him. JANET picks a book from the bookcase and sits down stage Center. When MRS. COLBY enters from the window, she puts her jacket, gloves, hat and shears on the chair down Left. JANET is apparently absorbed in her book, and the clicking of the TYPEWRITER indicates that MATTHEW is hard at work in the study. MRS. COLBY looks sharply at JANET.)

MRS. COLBY. That must be a very fascinating book!

JANET. *(With a fine start of surprise)* Oh, Grandmother! Is it time for your lemonade?

MRS. COLBY. It is, but you evidently weren't expecting me!

(JANET is puzzled, and a little apprehensive.)
Otherwise Mr. Anderson would hardly have left his glasses behind him!

JANET. *(In consternation)* Oh!

MRS. COLBY. It would be interesting to know what he's writing, since he can hardly see a typewriter without his glasses. *(Sits sofa.)*

JANET. Shall I—take them in to him?

MRS. COLBY. Yes, do. Before he makes some ghastly mistake.

(JANET, looking very flustered, takes the glasses and goes into the study. The clicking of the TYPEWRITER stops as she opens the door. MRS. COLBY comes down, picks up Janet's book and reads the title aloud.)

"Walks in Rome." *(She opens the book and reads aloud)* "Inscription on lady's tomb Anno Domini—" Very likely!

(She drops the book, sits down and turns as JANET re-enters immediately and closes the door behind her.)

You know, darling, it would be a kindness to that young man to allow him to get on with his work in the morning.

JANET. (*At Center table*) He has been working, Grandmother. Very hard! We were only chatting for a few minutes.

MRS. COLBY. He was engaged to work, not chat!

JANET. It was my fault. I interrupted him.

MRS. COLBY. Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

JANET. I don't see that it was a great crime.

MRS. COLBY. If you were responsible for the young man's losing his job, you might see it!

JANET. (*Filled with horror at this thought*) Yes!

MRS. COLBY. Did they have my book at the library?

JANET. (*Crosses back of table. With some embarrassment*) The fact is, Grandmother, I haven't gone to the village yet.

MRS. COLBY. (*Leaning forward to look at her*) Do you mean that you haven't done the marketing?

JANET. I'm afraid I haven't. I forgot all about it.

MRS. COLBY. I think you've taken leave of your senses!

JANET. I must have. I'm terribly sorry.

(*SARAH enters up Center Left, carrying a glass of lemonade on a small tray.*)

MRS. COLBY. Being sorry won't put your father's luncheon on the table at one o'clock!

JANET. Don't worry. It won't take long. I'll go at once!

MRS. COLBY. Then stop chattering, and go!

JANET. Yes, Grandmother! (*She hurries off Center.*)

(*SARAH brings the lemonade down to MRS. COLBY, who takes the glass without speaking. SARAH waits with an anxious expression as MRS. COLBY takes a sip.*)

MRS. COLBY. (*With an approach to a smile*) Very good.

SARAH. (*Crosses up Center. With enormous relief*) I was afraid I had put too much sugar in it.

MRS. COLBY. (*After a second thoughtful sip*) Not a bit!

(*SARAH looks very happy.*)

Have they come back?

SARAH. (*Back of Center table*) Not yet. And they left at ten-thirty this morning.

MRS. COLBY. Getting earlier every day.

SARAH. It's Mr. Gordon. He began to talk about a drink before he had finished his egg.

MRS. COLBY. A strange friend for my son! (*She takes another sip.*)

SARAH. Oh, I almost forgot! I talked to Betty at the Schuyler's this morning.

MRS. COLBY. (*Looking at her over her glass*) Well?

SARAH. Miss Janet didn't go there last night.

MRS. COLBY. Are you sure?

SARAH. Yes. It's true they were expected, but Betty said that Miss Janet rang up at a little after eight, to say they weren't coming. And, she said the Englishman was very disappointed, because he had liked Mr. Anderson so much when they were there a week ago.

MRS. COLBY. Do you know what time they got home?

SARAH. Yes. It was midnight. I know, because I had looked just before I heard Miss Janet's car.

MRS. COLBY. Then they had been together for four hours. Heaven knows where!

SARAH. That's the size of it.

MRS. COLBY. It's preposterous!

(*SARAH nods and MRS. COLBY thinks very hard, drinks more of her lemonade, and thinks again.*)

The question is, what to do!

(*SARAH nods, and MRS. COLBY thinks, drinks and reaches a conclusion.*)

When Miss Janet returns, tell her that I want to see her at once.

SARAH. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. COLBY. And after I have seen her, I shall talk to the young gentleman! I should have done it weeks ago. I have been stupid. Very stupid!

SARAH. You can't blame yourself!

MRS. COLBY. I can, and I do! (*She drinks, finishing the glass*) I shall have another glass of lemonade.

SARAH. Yes, ma'am!

(*SARAH takes glass. As she does so GRAHAM enters up Center Right. SARAH exits up Center Left, closing door.*)

GRAHAM. Oh, it's you, Mother!

MRS. COLBY. It is. Are you disappointed?

GRAHAM. (*Crosses to Left by fireplace. Smiling*) I was simply surprised to find you here. I thought you'd be working in the garden. I forgot that it was time for your lemonade.

MRS. COLBY. (*Turning to him fully*) You don't usually stop work at eleven-thirty!

GRAHAM. I haven't actually stopped. I just thought I'd break off for a few minutes. (*Crosses to chair Left. Very casually*) Where is everyone?

MRS. COLBY. She's gone to the village with Mr. Gordon!

(*GRAHAM smiles patiently.*)

To drink!

GRAHAM. (*Amused*) Hardly at eleven-thirty.

MRS. COLBY. They went at ten-thirty, so they've been drinking for an hour!

GRAHAM. They're probably taking a drive. It's a lovely morning.

MRS. COLBY. Every morning this week has been lovely, and they have spent every morning in a bar!

GRAHAM. You seem to have very accurate information about them.

MRS. COLBY. My information is always accurate.

(*GRAHAM smiles.*)

And so is my judgment! (*She looks at him firmly*) If you're thinking of marrying her, I advise you to change your mind!

GRAHAM. (*Sits sofa*) I suppose you mean Mrs. Warburton.

MRS. COLBY. How perceptive of you!

GRAHAM. What gave you the idea that I wanted to marry her?

MRS. COLBY. That has been obvious since she entered the house! It's increasingly obvious every time you look at her!

GRAHAM. This is very interesting!

MRS. COLBY. It is to me! Have you stopped to think what life would be like with a woman who spent every morning drinking? Who would fill your house with cigarette smoke from cellar to garret? Who would have radios blaring at you from every room?

GRAHAM. That's a very alarming picture! I take it that you don't like her?

MRS. COLBY. I like her very much! She's warm, and generous, and kind. But she would overturn your household!

GRAHAM. I think she would understand that a writer has to live a disciplined life. She's an intelligent woman.

MRS. COLBY. She's also a very young woman,—as used to gaiety as you are to solitude.

GRAHAM. True. But I think she's been quite happy this week.

MRS. COLBY. Yes. It's amused her to have to go to the village for a drink, and to the garden for a cigarette. But I doubt if she would like to spend the rest of her life rushing in and out of the house!—If you marry her, Graham, you'll have to change your habits.

GRAHAM. I cannot do creative work except in a quiet house. Smoking and drinking are inseparable from disorder.

MRS. COLBY. In your mind, they are. But to Mrs. Warburton, they are normal pleasures.

GRAHAM. There are always adjustments to be made in marriage.

MRS. COLBY. But you're not used to making adjustments, Graham. You are used to a household that revolves around you. That is not a good preparation for marriage with a high-spirited young woman. I advise you to give up the thought of marrying her, Graham.

GRAHAM. (*Rises, crosses back of sofa*) We'll see.

MRS. COLBY. That means you're going to propose before lunch!

(*GRAHAM laughs.*)

In that case, you'd better tell her the truth. It wouldn't be quite fair to let it burst upon her the day after she married you.

GRAHAM. The truth is simply that I live in a well-ordered house, and must, to do my work.

MRS. COLBY. But it's your duty to tell her that the rules of this house were made by you, not by me. And I think that revelation would upset her.

GRAHAM. (*Crosses back to sofa*) Possibly.

MRS. COLBY. Let well enough alone, Graham. You enjoy your life. Don't risk changing it now.

GRAHAM. (*Touching MRS. COLBY on the shoulder. After thinking for a moment*) Perhaps you're right, Mother. Now, if you'll forgive me, I'll get back to my work.

(*SARAH enters with lemonade.*)

MRS. COLBY. You should never have interrupted it!

(*GRAHAM, smiling ironically, goes off, up Center, closes double doors.*)

SARAH. (*In a whisper, as he disappears*) Mr. Colby seems to be very depressed!

MRS. COLBY. He'll get over it! (*Taking the glass, she drinks, and almost beams*) Delicious.

SARAH. (*Crosses back of table*) You're glad Mrs. Warburton's going, aren't you?

MRS. COLBY. Well—yes— She's a disturbing influence.

SARAH. But she's such a kind person! She never sees me but she stops for a chat.

MRS. COLBY. (*She sips her lemonade*) And what do you chat about?

SARAH. The places she's been, and the things she's seen. She's seen everything! She saw "South Pacific" three times! And she says if I ever come to New York, she'll get me tickets for anything I want to see. She can! She knows everyone. And they all love her!

MRS. COLBY. Did she tell you so?

SARAH. No, but how could they help it! She's so friendly. And so much fun! Why, she even makes Mr. Colby laugh!

MRS. COLBY. Yes.

SARAH. (*Regretfully*) The house'll seem quiet without her.

MRS. COLBY. She's put notions in your head! I advise you to get rid of them!

SARAH. I can't help thinking I'd like to see some of the things she's seen! "South Pacific"!

MRS. COLBY. (*Actually smiling*) You're a good girl, Sarah.

SARAH. (*Overcome by this unprecedented praise*) Thank you, Mrs. Colby.

MRS. COLBY. And you've led a busy, useful, unselfish life. The only kind of life in which there is any real satisfaction. (*Rises*) Remember that, even if you haven't seen "South Pacific"! (*Puts glass on table*)

(*SARAH nods unhappily.*)

Well, I must think of getting back to my garden. (*Crosses down left.*)

SARAH. (*Crosses back to sofa*) Do you think you ought to go out again? That sun's very hot today.

MRS. COLBY. (*Back of chair Left*) Of course it is! That's why the weeds are springing up like mushrooms. But I'll show them! If I can manage my son, I ought to be able to manage a few weeds!

(*LAUGHTER off Center, then CONSTANCE and BILLY enter, leaving doors open.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Stopping at sight of her*) Oh, Mrs. Colby!

MRS. COLBY. Well, you're back early this morning!

CONSTANCE. Yes, I think we are.

MRS. COLBY. But then, you got an early start.

CONSTANCE. Yes. And I suppose you've already done a great deal of work in the garden.

MRS. COLBY. In the garden, and out of it! I have had a really useful morning.

CONSTANCE. I envy you. Mr. Gordon and I cannot say that we've had a *useful* morning.

MRS. COLBY. But then, that wasn't your object, was it? (*She turns to SARAH*) You may go, Sarah.

(*SARAH crosses to up Center.*)

And don't forget that I want to see Miss Janet the moment she returns.

SARAH. Yes, ma'am. (*SARAH goes off up Center Right.*)

MRS. COLBY. Now I shall go back to *my* task, and you and Mr. Gordon can go on with yours! (*She picks up her large hat, gloves, coat and shears*) By the way, my son was looking for you a few minutes ago.

CONSTANCE. (*Looking pleased*) He was? You mean that he stopped work, and came down?

MRS. COLBY. Exactly! An unprecedented thing. It's a pity you weren't here! I'm sure you'll forgive me for leaving you.

CONSTANCE. (*Not smiling*) Definitely!

(*She and BILLY watch in silence as MRS. COLBY goes out through the windows Left.*)

Somebody's been feeding her raw meat. (*Crosses down Left.*)

BILLY. Yeah. I wonder who.

CONSTANCE. She probably ate a piece of Graham when he came down.

(BILLY laughs. CONSTANCE thinks quietly for a moment, still facing the windows. Presently, she nods thoughtfully, as if she had reached a conclusion.)

BILLY. (*Who has been watching her*) I think so too.

CONSTANCE. (*Turning to him*) What do you think? (*Below Center chair to Left.*)

BILLY. That Graham told her he was going to, and that she told him he mustn't. Ask you to marry him, I mean. (*Sits sofa*)

(CONSTANCE smiles.)

But I wonder what Graham did then! Do you suppose he told her to go to hell? Or did he say, "All right, Mummy. Anything to make you happy."

CONSTANCE. He said, "All right, Mummy." (*Sits on armchair Left.*)

BILLY. I'd give my right arm to believe that, but I don't.

CONSTANCE. Then what put her in such hilarious spirits?

BILLY. Just bullying him. Or perhaps she had been kicking Matthew before we came in. That always tones her up.

(CONSTANCE laughs.)

I would like to point something out to you.

CONSTANCE. Do.

BILLY. We got on very well together.

CONSTANCE. Yes, I know.

BILLY. Don't just brush it off like that!? Very few people really enjoy each other. I daresay that in your thirty-eight years—

CONSTANCE. (*Indignantly*) Who said I was thirty-eight!

BILLY. *WHO'S WHO.*

CONSTANCE. You cad!

BILLY. That's the sort of thing I mean! I amuse you. You think that isn't important, but it is. (*Crosses to Center table*) I haven't Graham's brains; of course, nor

his character, nor his looks. (*He breaks off*) It would have been polite of you to contradict me at some point!

CONSTANCE. I didn't feel that I could.

BILLY. (*Deflated*) Oh. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE. Recovering*) Well, the fact is, you like me and you don't know whether you like Graham or not.

CONSTANCE. Now that's absurd!

BILLY. You couldn't! You haven't seen enough of him.

CONSTANCE. I've spent six days in his house!

BILLY. During which you have been alone with him exactly three hours and twenty-two minutes!

CONSTANCE. How do you know?

BILLY. I've kept score. With me you have had seventeen solo hours. And nine of them have been in the morning. They're the ones that count! If you like someone in the morning, it's safe.

CONSTANCE. What is?

BILLY. (*Sits sofa*) Marriage.

(CONSTANCE *smiles*.)

If you married me, I wouldn't even be a gamble. You'd know exactly what you were getting. And you know that it's bearable! I watched you closely when I came down for breakfast that first morning, and you didn't flinch. That's the acid test. If anyone can stand the way I look in the morning, they can relax. There's nothing worse to come.

CONSTANCE. Bill, I think—

BILLY. I haven't nearly finished. A husband and wife ought to be the same kind of people. You and I are. I hope you won't think I'm trying to insult you! I know that you're an angel, and I know what I am, but we are the same kind of people!

CONSTANCE. I know. I told Graham that the day we met.

BILLY. (*Very pleased*) Did you really!

CONSTANCE. Yes. I told him that we both had low tastes.

BILLY. (*Rises, turns upstage Left*) Oh.

CONSTANCE. (*Amused*) I only meant by the standards of this house. I think we have very good taste.

BILLY. At least we're comfortable together. And you never would be with Graham! (*Crosses to Right end of sofa*) He's been corrupted by his mother. It would take you years to get him in shape. And they'd be such ghastly years for you! Imagine living in a house with no one who spoke your language.

CONSTANCE. I wouldn't be.

BILLY. No? (*He thinks*) Well, Matthew and Janet are still human. But neither of them drinks!

CONSTANCE. (*Rises. Crosses, kneels across sofa*) Sarah does.

BILLY. Sarah? The maid, you mean?

CONSTANCE. (*Nodding*) She drinks gin.

BILLY. (*Fascinated*) You're lying! How do you know?

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to love seat*) I bought it yesterday.

BILLY. When?

CONSTANCE. (*Puts coat on bench in hall*) When I took Janet to the village! I did the marketing, so that she'd have time to— (*Stops on the brink of saying what JANET had had time for*) get something she needed, and the marketing included a bottle of gin for Sarah! (*Sits love seat.*)

BILLY. (*Crosses Center. With conviction*) The next time I see that woman, I'm going to kiss her!

CONSTANCE. (*Alarmed*) You mustn't! It's a secret! Janet made me promise not to tell anyone! (*Giggling*) But I had to tell you! It's such fun to think of Sarah getting potted every night, as she listens to her radio!

BILLY. Her what?!

CONSTANCE. She has a radio, too.

BILLY. That I don't believe.

CONSTANCE. It's true! I can hear it in my bathroom. It comes through the pipes. Last night, when you were

listening to Beethoven, I was having "There Is Nothing Like a Dame." It was a little indistinct, but I could make it out.

BILLY. I'll give you a pair of ear-phones if you marry Graham.

CONSTANCE. Very thoughtful.

BILLY. Look here, you're not going to marry him, are you?

CONSTANCE. I doubt if he'll ask me to.

BILLY. Oh, he will.

CONSTANCE. I hope you're right!

BILLY. (*Depressed*) Oh, it's like that! (*Sighs. Crosses up and back of desk*) It's a pity it couldn't have been me instead of Graham. It would have been such fun trying to make you happy. I think I'd have been very good at it.

CONSTANCE. (*Kindly*) I'm sure you would.

BILLY. I'm not sure, but I'd have made one hell of a try.

(CONSTANCE *smiles*.)

(*Sits end of desk*) I've spent a good part of this week trying to think what present I'd give you the night we got back from our wedding trip. And do you know what I decided?

CONSTANCE. (*With interest*) No!

BILLY. You'll have to marry me to find out.

CONSTANCE. (*Laughing*) Idiot!

BILLY. We *are* going to New York tomorrow, aren't we? Even if you've become engaged to Graham in the meantime?

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling*) Yes.

BILLY. Then will you do me a favor?

CONSTANCE. Certainly.

BILLY. I'd like to take you to call on my sister. We've always been very good friends and I'd like her to know what I—missed.

(CONSTANCE *is touched and he laughs*.)

Don't worry, I'm not going to be wistful. But it's a

great temptation! I think you might marry me if you thought I was very unhappy. Well, let's approach it from that angle. I am wildly unhappy!

CONSTANCE. Yes, you look it.

BILLY. (*With an approach to gravity*) I probably don't. But you can't look anything as complicated as my feeling about saying goodbye to you.

CONSTANCE. You're not going to say goodbye to me. We're going to call on your sister.

BILLY. That won't be quite the same as hearing your voice every morning, as I come down the stairs. Or watching the expression on your face when you're being polite to Mrs. Colby. Or seeing you down a double Scotch without turning a hair of your little head! That reminds me. I've never told you how much I like your head.

CONSTANCE. I'm sure you have.

BILLY. No. It was your hands. But I like your head almost as much. It thinks such delightful things. And like your hands, it's decorative. Altogether it's one of the most satisfactory heads I've ever encountered.

CONSTANCE. Then I'll keep it.

BILLY. Do. And when you look at it in the mirror, remember that it's something that I love very much.

CONSTANCE. I'll remember.

BILLY. (*Looking at her earnestly*) God knows I will!

GRAHAM. (*Enters, and speaks from the Center doorway*) Am I interrupting something?

BILLY. The next generation is beating on the door! (*Turns*) Come in, Graham. We've been expecting you.

GRAHAM. (*Looking surprised*) I didn't know you had come back.

CONSTANCE. Then you didn't come down to see us?!

GRAHAM. No, I just came down to get some more paper.

CONSTANCE. Oh.

(*GRAHAM crosses to Right and exits. As the door closes behind him, CONSTANCE and BILLY slowly*

turn to look at each other. There is a fractional pause.)

All right, Mummy. Anything to make you happy.

BILLY. (*Crosses back to desk and leans over it*) Looks like.

(They both look back to the study door.)

Of course, from my point of view, the sun has just risen!

GRAHAM. (*The door opens, and GRAHAM enters Right carrying some paper. He starts to cross to up Center, then hesitates and finally turns to BILLY*) Billy, would it be outrageous of me to ask you to let me have five minutes alone with Constance?

BILLY. (*Crosses up back of desk*) That wasn't the sun. It was just a poor little hope exploding!

GRAHAM. It won't be more than five minutes. I must get back to work.

BILLY. (*Crosses up to GRAHAM*) Don't hurry on my account. I have to go back to the village, to get on with my career. (*He turns to CONSTANCE*) I'll put in an order for those earphones. (*He smiles at them*) Bless you, children. (*He goes out—up Center Right.*)

GRAHAM. What was he talking about?

CONSTANCE. Several different things.

GRAHAM. Just nonsense?

CONSTANCE. Not wholly.

GRAHAM. (*Crosses down front of Center table. Smiling*) It was unkind of me to interrupt him, but I owe him an unkindness.

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to GRAHAM*) For what?!

GRAHAM. Usurping you!

CONSTANCE. You wanted him to take me off your hands in the morning!

GRAHAM. I didn't want him to perch at your elbow all the while you were painting me!

(They smile, and there is a little silence.)

CONSTANCE. Graham, sit down for a minute, I want to check something.

GRAHAM. But the portrait's finished. (*Sits sofa, posing for CONSTANCE to finish painting.*)

CONSTANCE. I just want to make one tiny change—there. (*Starts touching up portrait.*)

GRAHAM. It's very hard for me to realize that you won't be here at this time tomorrow.

CONSTANCE. No, we'll be half way to New York, I suppose.

GRAHAM. We?

CONSTANCE. Billy is going to drive in with me.

GRAHAM. Naturally!

(*They smile again, and then GRAHAM's expression becomes grave.*)

It's been peculiarly delightful to have you here this week. Even when I wasn't with you, the knowledge that you were in the house made me—happy.

CONSTANCE. (*Brush in mouth*) I'm glad of that. I want you to be happy.

GRAHAM. I haven't been, very often. My life has been, in many ways, unsatisfactory. (*Turns to CONSTANCE.*)

CONSTANCE. Uh-uh-uh. (*Indicating he is losing the position he's holding.*)

GRAHAM. (*Resuming pose*) Sorry. And until last Sunday, it hadn't occurred to me that I could do anything about it.

(*CONSTANCE listens very attentively.*)

Although I didn't realize it, I think I had begun to feel that my life was over.

CONSTANCE. But that's ridiculous! Ridiculous!

GRAHAM. Is it? Can people make a fresh start at my age?

CONSTANCE. At any age! (*Crosses back to easel.*)

GRAHAM. They could if they had you to give them courage! (*He smiles at her*) That's what it reduces itself to. With you beside me, I could do anything. Without you, I shall simply go on as I have. Eating, sleeping, working, day after day! It isn't a bad life, you know. It's quite bearable.

CONSTANCE. But life ought to be glorious!

GRAHAM. Mine would be, if you married me.

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses down back of sofa*) No, Graham, I couldn't! I want you to be happy. I want it terribly.

GRAHAM. If you want me to be happy, you will!

CONSTANCE. Graham, I wanted you to ask me to marry you. (*Crosses to Center*) Because it was quite clear to me that if you did, it would mean that you had declared your independence! Now that you've done it, you can go on doing it! You can tell your mother—quite gently, that from now on, everything is going to be different! That all those awful rules are to be abolished; and that your lovely house is going to be a real home, and not a kind of prison! It'll take a little courage, of course! (*Crosses back of sofa*) Heaven knows I don't underestimate her! But if you had enough courage to say, "Mother, I am going to marry that dissolute Warburton woman!" you'll find it easy to say, "Mother, we're going to get rid of that damned gong!"

GRAHAM. I will find nothing easy without you.

CONSTANCE. (*Puts brushes in box, then cleans palette*) It's just a matter of habit! You must promise yourself to do one thing, every day, that your mother disapproves of! You've done your good deed today, so you can relax, but tomorrow I suggest that you buy some new records! And do let Sarah listen to them!

GRAHAM. Sarah?

CONSTANCE. She's especially fond of "South Pacific." (*Smiling.*)

GRAHAM. Oh—that play, you mean?

CONSTANCE. (*Holding paint rag*) Oh, Graham, you break my heart! (*Puts palette in box.*)

GRAHAM. There's a rough justice in that. (*Smiles*) You're in a fair way to break mine.

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to front of sofa and sits. Troubled*) No, Graham, please don't say things like that!

GRAHAM. Why shouldn't I tell you the truth?

CONSTANCE. It isn't the truth! You imagine that you're in love with me, but you can't be. You've only known me a week!

GRAHAM. I loved you before I had known you a day!

CONSTANCE. (*Unhappily*) Of course you did! You had been so lonely, and bored, that you were ready to fall head over heels in love with the first reasonably attractive woman you saw!

GRAHAM. (*Looks off. With humor*) It isn't like that, Constance. It's true that I lead a quiet life. I have to, to do my work. But I don't live on a desert island! I have met other women in the past fifteen years. What has happened to me—perhaps unfortunately, is that I have at last met someone whom I can't help loving. (*Rather sadly*) I have felt, all this week, that there was a certain sympathy between us.

CONSTANCE. (*Eagerly*) There is, of course! I like you very much!

GRAHAM. In my best moments I went beyond that, and hoped that you might want to marry me. Before you came here, the strange life that I had been leading seemed quite bearable. I don't think it would again. A prisoner who has been within an inch of liberty, can't go back to his treadmill the same man who left it! If you go out of my life, all the brightness and beauty that you have let into it in the last week will go with you.

CONSTANCE. (*Rises*) But I had no thought of marrying! (*Crosses up Center—puts cloth in paint box.*)

GRAHAM. You're free.

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses up to easel*) I must go on working! I need the money. The children aren't quite self-supporting!

GRAHAM. (*Rises*) My income would be more than adequate.

CONSTANCE. But I don't *want* to marry! I've been perfectly happy!

GRAHAM. (*Crosses up to easel*) I envy you. I have never been really happy, until this week.

CONSTANCE. Graham! (*Checking herself*) You must give me time to think! This isn't a thing that can be settled in a moment!

GRAHAM. What is there to think about? You are either going to give me the world, or take it from me. It's simply a question of what my life is to be.

CONSTANCE. But it's a question of my life, too! (*Crosses into study with portrait*) That's why I need time to think!

GRAHAM. (*Takes easel and paint box into study Right*) We have no time! We may be interrupted at any minute.

CONSTANCE. (*Returning, crosses up Center and stands at table*) Let me have an hour! Just one hour alone, so that I can think calmly. You must allow me that!

GRAHAM. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE*) If I leave you, who will take my part?

CONSTANCE. (*Touched*) I will! I promise you.

GRAHAM. (*Smiling*) Then there can't be any question of your decision. (*Seriously. Crosses to desk for papers*) But if you can shorten the time, please do. (*Crosses up to Center door*) An hour seems long to a man who is waiting to hear whether he is to live or die. (*He slowly exits Center Right.*)

(CONSTANCE crosses unhappily up Center to bay window in hall murmuring "Oh, dear!" As she walks into the hall, MRS. COLBY crosses the terrace to the upper windows, peeks into the room, sees that the room is empty, and bursts into the song "Nothing Like A Dame," finishing with "What ain't we got, we ain't got dames." As she sinks into love seat, CONSTANCE, from her position in the hall, watches MRS. COLBY intently as she finishes the song, then crosses down to Center table.)

CONSTANCE. (*Looking very happy*) It's your radio!

MRS. COLBY. (*Drawing herself to her full height*) My dear Mrs. Warburton! (*With enormous dignity. Rises*) The sun was very hot this morning. I must change. I shall look forward to seeing you at luncheon. (*She takes a step towards the Center door.*)

CONSTANCE. You may be seeing me at luncheon for the next several years. Will you look forward to that?

MRS. COLBY. (*Stopping*) What do you mean?

CONSTANCE. Graham has asked me to marry him.

MRS. COLBY. No!

CONSTANCE. Yes! I'm to think it over for the next hour. And I'm to remember that he's never been happy in his life.

MRS. COLBY. Indeed!

CONSTANCE. He could bear his life before I came, but now that I have given him a glimpse of happiness, he doesn't think that he could go back to his treadmill!

MRS. COLBY. His treadmill!

CONSTANCE. (*Picks up glass from table*) He's waiting now, to know whether he is to live, (*Smells MRS. COLBY'S drink, and looks startled*) or die!

MRS. COLBY. (*Removing her gloves with an angry flourish. Puts gloves and shears on desk*) And while he's waiting, he'll write another chapter!

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to MRS. COLBY*) Then why don't you have another gin?

MRS. COLBY. (*Hesitates for a moment only*) Why not? (*She picks up hand bell from desk, and rings it*) What would you like?

CONSTANCE. Is there anything except gin?!

MRS. COLBY. I keep a bottle of Scotch for emergencies like this.

CONSTANCE. Then I'll take Scotch.

(*MRS. COLBY rings bell.*)

You humbug—you do everything you disapprove of.

MRS. COLBY. I—do everything Graham disapproves of.

SARAH. (*Enters Center Left*) Yes, Mrs. Colby? (*Crosses down to MRS. COLBY.*)

MRS. COLBY. I will have another glass of lemonade. And Mrs. Warburton will join me in a glass of ginger ale.

SARAH. How nice! (*She smiles, a thing she has not done before, and hurries off.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Looking dubious*) I've never put ginger ale in Scotch.

MRS. COLBY. Neither has Sarah. Trust her!

(CONSTANCE *sits on down stage end of love seat.*)
Are you in love with him?

CONSTANCE. No.

MRS. COLBY. Women generally are. I can't think why.

CONSTANCE. He's very good-looking, of course.

MRS. COLBY. His father was better-looking. There was a man! Generous, warm-hearted, full of humor! We could never understand how Graham happened!

(*The study door opens, and MATTHEW enters. He looks quickly around the room, smiles shyly, and then pauses irresolutely, looking harrassed.*)

Something the matter, Mr. Anderson?

MATTHEW. Yes, I'm afraid there is.

MRS. COLBY. (*Sharply*) Well, what is it?

MATTHEW. If I could trouble you to come into the study for a moment, I'll tell you.

MRS. COLBY. You can tell me here.

MATTHEW. (*Looking nervously at CONSTANCE*) It's not very important. It can wait.

MRS. COLBY. (*With grim humor*) It needn't. You can speak freely in front of Mrs. Warburton. (*Smiling at CONSTANCE*) You will forgive this interruption, Constance?

CONSTANCE. I'll forgive you anything.

MATTHEW. (*Moves in. Looking very happy*) Oh, it's like that! I wondered when you'd get together.

MRS. COLBY. Well, go on. Out with it!

MATTHEW. Well, you know the short story that Mr.

Colby finished last Sunday? When he said that he had been reading to you?

MRS. COLBY. Yes, he was very pleased with it.

MATTHEW. Exactly. And he's expecting to have a letter about it on Monday. He usually does hear in a week.

MRS. COLBY. (*Impatiently*) Well?

MATTHEW. I didn't send it!

MRS. COLBY. (*Strongly*) Good heaven!

(*She and MATTHEW look at each other in consternation.*)

MATTHEW. I just found it! It was stuck in the back of my drawer!

MRS. COLBY. He'll fire you!

(MATTHEW *nods miserably.*)

CONSTANCE. But that's ridiculous!

(*A fractional pause, and CONSTANCE turns to MATTHEW.*)

CONSTANCE. Where were you supposed to send it?

MATTHEW. To the International.

CONSTANCE. Good! I know Allen Patterson.

MRS. COLBY. (*Happily*) Intimately?

CONSTANCE. Intimately! (*To MATTHEW*) Is it ready?

MATTHEW. Yes, I had finished typing it.

CONSTANCE. Then give it to me, and I'll take it in to him tomorrow.

MATTHEW. (*Unhappily*) Tomorrow's Sunday. He won't be at the office.

CONSTANCE. No, but I know where he will be! And I'll call him there and tell him that he's just bought a short story!

MRS. COLBY. (*With satisfaction*) That's the way to do things! (*Rises. To MATTHEW, with a flourish*) Get it! (*Crosses to chair Center and sits.*)

MATTHEW. Right! (*He starts off, then stops*) I'd better do over the first page. It's badly crumpled!

CONSTANCE. There's no hurry. I'm not going until tomorrow!

MATTHEW. You're very kind!

(CONSTANCE *smiles at him and he hurries into the study. MRS. COLBY removes coat.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Rises, crosses to sofa and sits*)

(*A TYPEWRITER is heard in the study.*)

What a nice boy he is!

(SARAH *enters, with a tray containing what looks like a glass of lemonade and a glass of ginger ale. She crosses down back of Center table, serves drinks.*)

MRS. COLBY. (*Sits chair Center*) Ah, here is Sarah.

SARAH. (*Serves CONSTANCE first, then crosses to MRS. COLBY, gives her drink, takes MRS. COLBY'S coat*) I hope I didn't keep you waiting.

MRS. COLBY. (*Taking her glass*) We haven't been bored. What time is it?

SARAH. Five minutes past twelve.

MRS. COLBY. Then it's extremely probable that we will both have another drink later on.

CONSTANCE. (*Taking her glass, sits sofa*) You know, until this week, I never drank before lunch!

(*TYPEWRITER stops.*)

MRS. COLBY. Then you've missed a great experience! It's the alcohol you got before twelve that counts! (*She raises her glass*) To you!

CONSTANCE. (*Raising hers*) To you!

(*They smile affectionately at each other and drink.*)

MRS. COLBY. I never read Shelley's Ode to a Skylark without thinking of Sarah!

CONSTANCE. (*Baffled*) And how do you account for that?

MRS. COLBY. She produces one perfect Tom Collins

after another! I always expect her to break on one of the high notes, but she never does. We'll ring if we want you, Sarah.

SARAH. Yes, ma'am. (*She goes off Center with Mrs. COLBY'S coat.*)

CONSTANCE. Wouldn't it be simpler just to ring, and have her bring in a drink?

MRS. COLBY. That would be dangerous. It might be Graham intending to ask for a glass of water.

CONSTANCE. Has he never drunk?

MRS. COLBY. Just that glass of sherry before dinner, which he dislikes intensely. Can you guess why he drinks it?

CONSTANCE. No.

MRS. COLBY. He thinks it's elegant.

CONSTANCE. I think the same thing about Martinis. Why does he pretend that it's you who objects to things?

MRS. COLBY. Because he can't bear to have people dislike him.

CONSTANCE. Why do you let him get away with it?

MRS. COLBY. I don't care what people think about me. Besides, it's rather fun to act. I quite enjoy watching people form wrong conclusions about me. And it keeps him quiet.

CONSTANCE. But he's always quiet!

MRS. COLBY. That's what you think.

CONSTANCE. You mean he can be objectionable?

MRS. COLBY. It's one of his greatest talents.

CONSTANCE. What does he do?

MRS. COLBY. It depends upon his mood. Sometimes he shouts, and sometimes he's just nasty in a low voice.

CONSTANCE. Was he always like that?

MRS. COLBY. Potentially. But like most men he was undeveloped until he married. He had the misfortune to marry a gentle girl who loved him. If he had married you twenty years ago, things might have turned out quite differently. For you would have kicked him in the face the first week.

CONSTANCE. Why didn't you kick him in the face?

MRS. COLBY. He would have turned me out of the house! Then Janet would have grown up alone with him.

CONSTANCE. Janet can take care of herself, now! Why don't you escape?

MRS. COLBY. I have exactly \$800.00 dollars a year of my own. And I would not be happy in an old ladies' home.

CONSTANCE. Well, couldn't you get a job?

MRS. COLBY. Not at my age. There are no Grandma Moses in the business world. But don't worry. When he is in a good humor, life is quite bearable.

CONSTANCE. But he'll be in a bad humor when I tell him that I'm not going to marry him.

MRS. COLBY. Tell him that you smoke in bed. That'll take care of that.

(MATTHEW enters from study with manuscript.)

CONSTANCE. Is that the story?

MATTHEW. Yes. (He comes down to her.)

CONSTANCE. I'll put it in my bag at once, so that I won't go off without it. (She does so.)

MATTHEW. (Crosses back of Center table) It's very good of you to rescue a nitwit.

CONSTANCE. You're not a nitwit, and I love to rescue people!

MATTHEW. Yes, I know that.

MRS. COLBY. Do you know that you were late for luncheon yesterday!

MATTHEW. You hadn't even sat down!

MRS. COLBY. But he noticed that you didn't walk into the dining-room with us, and he mentioned it to me. Don't let it happen again!

MATTHEW. It won't. I assure you.

MRS. COLBY. Now get back to your work, and stop wasting time!

MATTHEW. Yes, Mrs. Colby. (He goes into the study, closes door.)

MRS. COLBY. (*As the door closes*) Young fool!

CONSTANCE. You don't like him?

MRS. COLBY. Of course I do. But like all young men, he's a fool!

CONSTANCE. (*Cautiously*) I think that Janet likes him.

MRS. COLBY. Of course she does! Her father's such a snob that she was bound to fall in love with the first poor boy she met. I just thank God he's decent!

CONSTANCE. (*Cautiously*) Then you think she's in love with him?

MRS. COLBY. They're both in love! I spent the whole summer trying to keep them from discovering it.

CONSTANCE. I don't know why!

MRS. COLBY. The minute the cat's out of the bag, they'll be wanting to get married! And they haven't a penny between them.

CONSTANCE. What difference does that make, if they love each other?

MRS. COLBY. They can't live on love, and Graham would fire him in a minute.

CONSTANCE. Well, we'll have to get him a job of some kind.

MRS. COLBY. I've done it. The President of Minnesota was an old beau of mine—

CONSTANCE. You rascal!

MRS. COLBY. And he's promised to squeeze the boy in somewhere in the second semester.

CONSTANCE. Janet and Matthew don't know that, do they?

MRS. COLBY. They don't even know that I've seen them looking at each other! But this afternoon I'll talk to them and tell them that they must be sensible until February.

CONSTANCE. (*Rises. Hesitantly*) Mrs. Colby.

MRS. COLBY. (*Mellowed by her third drink*) Yes, my dear?

CONSTANCE. (*Moves away Left*) I've done an awful thing.

MRS. COLBY. Most of us have done awful things in our lives. What have you done?

CONSTANCE. I have been urging Janet and Matthew to get married at once.

MRS. COLBY. (*With conviction*) You idiot! (*A bitter pause*) And how did you expect them to live?

CONSTANCE. I naturally thought that Graham would support them.

MRS. COLBY. He would disown her!

CONSTANCE. Then he'd do it eventually, in any case!

MRS. COLBY. Nonsense! There's no disgrace attached to marrying a college professor! If we can get the boy established in a university, Graham might forget that there is a laundress in Matthew's closet!

CONSTANCE. (*Sits sofa*) I'm sure it's all right! They've only had the license since yesterday.

MRS. COLBY. They have a license?

CONSTANCE. Yes.

MRS. COLBY. You urged them to get it, I suppose?

CONSTANCE. Well, yes, I did.

MRS. COLBY. What a help you are!

CONSTANCE. I meant to be.

MRS. COLBY. That will be a great comfort when Graham hears of it, and begins to upbraid *me*!

CONSTANCE. He can't blame you. You had nothing to do with it.

MRS. COLBY. That won't matter to Graham. It's always me that he shouts at.

(*A little silence.*)

CONSTANCE. I think I shall marry Graham after all.

MRS. COLBY. (*Looks at her and smiles*) No, my dear. I spent a good ten minutes this morning trying to protect you from that calamity. We don't need two unhappy women in this house.

JANET. (*At this moment JANET hurries into the room from Center. She is carrying a newspaper, and her expression is agitated. Crosses down Center to MRS.*

COLBY) Grandmother! Something terrible has happened!

MRS. COLBY. What?

JANET. We're in the newspaper. Matthew and I! It's only a little article on an inside page, but somebody's bound to see it!

MRS. COLBY. What does it say?

JANET. (*After hesitating*) It says, "War Hero married to Local Girl!"

MRS. COLBY. You've done it!

JANET. Yes.

CONSTANCE. I wish I'd never been born!

JANET. They didn't even mention Daddy. I suppose they don't know that he has a daughter. But they recognized Matthew's name, and they tell how he got his decoration during the war.

CONSTANCE. The hero might cancel out the secretary.

MRS. COLBY. It leaves the laundress.

JANET. I'm terribly sorry, Grandmother!

CONSTANCE. It's not your fault. I dreamt this up.

JANET. (*Crosses back of table Center*) I'm not sorry we did it! I'm glad! Except for Grandmother's sake. He'll be so mean to her!

CONSTANCE. (*Strongly*) No, he won't! He won't even raise his voice! I'll see to that!

JANET. (*Hopefully*) What will you do?

CONSTANCE. (*Deflating*) That's a good question. (*Picks up glass.*)

MRS. COLBY. (*Rises, crosses to love seat*) I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to have another drink.

CONSTANCE. One thing is clear to me. I adore you!

(JANET takes CONSTANCE'S shoulder. MRS. COLBY blows a kiss to CONSTANCE. The TWO WOMEN look at each other, laughing.)

BILLY. (*Enters up Center Right and stands transfixed in the doorway*) What the hell!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE: *The same.*

TIME: *A moment later.*

As the Curtain rises, BILLY comes slowly down.

CONSTANCE. Oh, Billy, you're just in time. (CONSTANCE *picks up* MRS. COLBY'S *glass*) Mrs. Colby is ready for another gin!

BILLY. (*Slightly dazed*) Mrs. Colby has been drinking gin?

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling approvingly at MRS. COLBY*) For years, apparently.

MRS. COLBY. Since the year Graham entered college. My husband and I had to economize, so we began to think gin instead of Scotch.

BILLY. (*Nodding, but still dazed*) Graham told me that you had made sacrifices for him. (*Struck by a sudden thought*) Do you smoke, too?

MRS. COLBY. Not yet.

CONSTANCE. She couldn't! Graham doesn't like people to smoke.

BILLY. (*Seeing the light*) Oh, it's Graham! (*Going back to being puzzled*) Does he like people to drink?

MRS. COLBY. Heavens, no!

BILLY. And yet you sit here all morning, drinking gin!

MRS. COLBY. Nonsense! I work all morning! I just take an occasional Tom Collins to refresh me. (*With a change of voice*) Only Graham thinks it's plain lemonade!

BILLY. (*Gives a delightful chuckle*) Well, welcome aboard! (*To CONSTANCE. Takes MRS. COLBY's glass*) Where do I find the gin?

CONSTANCE. You ask Sarah for it.

BILLY. (*Crosses up Center. Starting towards the door*) She probably keeps it in the radio. (*He stops suddenly, and turns to CONSTANCE*) That reminds me! Did he, or didn't he?

CONSTANCE. He did.

BILLY. What did you say?

CONSTANCE. I said I'd think it over.

BILLY. And what have you decided?

CONSTANCE. It's a temptation. I'd be getting such a nice mother-in-law. But I don't think that's an adequate reason for marrying anyone.

BILLY. (*Looking very pleased with life*) Perhaps it isn't! (*As he goes off at Center, he begins to whistle.*)

JANET. Mrs. Warburton, does Daddy want you to marry him?

CONSTANCE. I'm afraid he does.

JANET. (*Crosses back of sofa and sits sofa*) Then the situation could hardly be worse! I mean, when he hears that you won't, and that Matthew and I have—It's going to be horrible.

CONSTANCE. Probably. But it's some consolation that the worst will be over in an hour.

JANET. How do you know it will?

CONSTANCE. We can see to it! I have to tell him my news—I said I would, and I think you'd better tell him yours before someone else does!

JANET. I couldn't! I haven't the courage! I wilt when I look at him.

CONSTANCE. Then let Matthew look at him. He should in any case!

MRS. COLBY. Of course he should! He's the head of the house!

(*She and CONSTANCE look at each other, and laugh.*)

JANET. The head of what house?!

MRS. COLBY. (*Rises; crosses, sits chair Center*) That's a technical expression. It means that from now on, Matthew is responsible for everything. Including explaining to your father why you married him!

JANET. It *wasn't* Matthew's idea! It was mine!

MRS. COLBY. You couldn't expect him to say that. A man who was decorated for bravery will think of something else. And Matthew will. Husbands are surprisingly resourceful.

JANET. But Matthew has only been a husband since last night!

CONSTANCE. It's all right, dear. The resourcefulness is built in—in all really good men. And you do think that Matthew is good, don't you?

JANET. I know he is. He's everything that's wonderful. He—

(*She breaks off as the study door opens and MATTHEW enters.*)

MATTHEW. (*Crosses front of love seat*) Forgive me for interrupting you, I heard Miss Janet's voice.

(*He turns to JANET, and CONSTANCE and MRS. COLBY look at him with great interest.*)

Miss Janet, could you come into the study for a moment?

CONSTANCE. Matthew, you needn't be elaborate. Janet told us the happy news.

MATTHEW. Oh, did she! (*He turns slowly to MRS. COLBY.*)

MRS. COLBY. I suppose you expect me to congratulate you!

MATTHEW. I can't say that I really expect it.

MRS. COLBY. Do you realize that you've landed us all in a mess?!

MATTHEW. Not Janet, I hope. (*Crosses to MRS. COLBY*) I think she has married someone who can make her happy.

(JANET looks very proud of him, and CONSTANCE smiles, but MRS. COLBY looks indignant.)

MRS. COLBY. Not if she dies of starvation!

MATTHEW. There's very little danger of that in this house.

MRS. COLBY. You may both be out of the house before dinner!

CONSTANCE. We've overlooked the power of the press, Matthew! Show him the paper.

MATTHEW. (*Crosses back of sofa to JANET*) Are we listed under the marriages?!

JANET. No! They gave us a separate paragraph! Here. (*She points to it.*)

MATTHEW. (*Having looked*) Oh, hell! (*He turns to MRS. COLBY*) You're right. I've landed us in a mess.

MRS. COLBY. (*Briskly*) It could be worse. Janet could have married someone that I don't like.

MATTHEW. (*A little cheered*) That's very kind of you.

MRS. COLBY. (*Glumly*) You can't live on my good will.

CONSTANCE. Does it make any difference that Graham likes Matthew?

MRS. COLBY. Not the slightest! He'd bundle him out of the house, the minute he heard it.

CONSTANCE. He wouldn't bundle his own daughter out of the house!

MRS. COLBY. Why not?

CONSTANCE. It wouldn't be human!

MRS. COLBY. Who has accused Graham of being human?!

JANET. Grandmother's right, Mrs. Warburton. He isn't like other people. You see, he doesn't really care about anything except his writing.

CONSTANCE. (*Rises; crosses Left*) Then that's a hope! Matthew is a perfect secretary! And if he fires him, won't that interfere with his writing?

MRS. COLBY. (*Turns to MATTHEW*) What's he working at now?!

MATTHEW. (*Looking a little excited*) An article that he was asked to write. On Victorian novelists. And I'm being very helpful about the economic background!

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses up*) Well, there we have it! Now don't wait for him to find out. You go upstairs and tell him yourself.

MATTHEW. How will I do that?

CONSTANCE. Lock the door, and go to it!

MATTHEW. (*Takes off his glasses, and begins to polish them violently*) I will!

CONSTANCE. At once!

MRS. COLBY. (*Rises*) Don't be silly! No one is allowed to interrupt Graham when he's writing! But after lunch, when he's in a good humor—

(*MATTHEW nods, and she draws herself up and takes a deep breath.*)

You know, it might work! (*Crosses to love seat.*)

JANET. (*Rises*) But what good will that do you, Grandmother? He might let us stay because Matthew's useful to him, but he'll resent it just the same. (*Turns to CONSTANCE*) It'll be the way it was when Grandmother made him send me to college. (*Crosses to MRS. COLBY*) He was mean to her for a whole year!

MRS. COLBY. (*Strongly*) What difference did that make? You got to college! That was all I cared about!

JANET. Yes. And while I was being happy, he was making you miserable.

MRS. COLBY. Rubbish! It was one of our most enjoyable winters! He liked it because he didn't have to talk, and I like it because I didn't have to listen! I'd be glad to live that year over again! (*Sits love seat.*)

JANET. It's not true! (*To CONSTANCE*) Have you ever been in the same house with someone who wouldn't speak to you!

CONSTANCE. No! (*Crosses to sofa and sits.*)

JANET. Grandmother often has! So have I! But it's worse for Grandmother, because she loves him!

MRS. COLBY. I will not be gossiped about!

JANET. (*Crosses to MRS. COLBY*) He takes advantage of her, because he knows that she loves him! If there's any dirty work to do, she does it! And if—

MRS. COLBY. Janet, be quiet!

JANET. I might as well be. Talking won't do any good, now that I've ruined everything! When I was a little girl, I told myself that as soon as I grew up, I'd take Grandmother away somewhere, so that she could be happy, and gay, and have friends, as she used to. And now all I've done is spoil it for her. It's easy to see that I'm Daddy's daughter. I'm as selfish as he is! (*She ends this by bursting into tears. Crosses to Right Center.*)

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to JANET*) Janet, dear! Please!

JANET. (*Trying to smile*) I'm sorry. I've never done that before in my life! (*She takes one of his hands, and holds it against her cheek.*)

BILLY. (*Enters Center, bearing MRS. COLBY'S lemonade. He starts down, then stops abruptly as he notices JANET and MATTHEW. Crosses down to Center table*) Now what?!

CONSTANCE. They were married last night. We forgot to tell you.

BILLY. Well, you can't think of everything. (*He meditates*) Was Graham best man?

CONSTANCE. No, we haven't told *him* yet.

BILLY. (*Crosses with drink to MRS. COLBY*) Will he be pleased?

MRS. COLBY. Probably not at first. Is that my lemonade?

BILLY. Yes, and there's a story connected with it. (*He continues as he crosses to her and gives her the glass*) Sarah, was telling me about some of Graham's endearing qualities, and between us—

MRS. COLBY. (*Interrupting loudly, after taking a sip*) This is lemonade!

BILLY. That's what I was going to tell you. I broke the gin bottle.

MRS. COLBY. (*In anguished voice*) Not the one that was new yesterday.

BILLY. Yes. It was heart-breaking to see it spreading all over the floor. But if you'll just hang on I'll go back to the village and get more gin. There's luckily a lot more where that came from.

CONSTANCE. Just take the lemonade back to Sarah. I'm going to take Mrs. Colby to a bar.

MRS. COLBY. A bar! I haven't been to a bar *in years!* (*Rises.*)

CONSTANCE. Then it's high time you went.

MRS. COLBY. (*Attracted by the idea*) I couldn't go anywhere in my gardening clothes!

CONSTANCE. Well, couldn't you just slip into another dress?

MRS. COLBY. Is there time? Wouldn't we be late for lunch?

CONSTANCE. We have three quarters of an hour. That's ample time. And it would be such fun! Do come! (*Crosses up Center.*)

MRS. COLBY. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE. Looking at her with suspicion*) I don't trust you.

(*CONSTANCE laughs.*)

You're up to something. What is it? Out with it!

CONSTANCE. I think you ought to be out of the house while Matthew is talking to Graham. And I think he ought to talk to him as soon as Graham comes down.

MRS. COLBY. But I think I should be here. You need a loud voice to deal with Graham, and I have one.

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to MRS. COLBY. Quietly*) Well, this is my affair, and no one else's. I'll talk to Mr. Colby as soon as he comes down.

JANET. (*Crosses to MATTHEW*) You go along, Grandmother! Matthew will handle Daddy!

MRS. COLBY. (*Having looked at him with admiration*) All right! We'll let you have him for the first round! When will he be down?

CONSTANCE. An hour from the time he left— About a quarter to one.

MRS. COLBY. (*To MATTHEW*) Then you may expect to see us, greatly refreshed, at five minutes to one!

MATTHEW. (*Crosses to JANET*) Don't hurry. I'm sure I can manage.

MRS. COLBY. (*Crosses up Center*) But it's always pleasant to know that there are seasoned troops ready to be rushed into action! (*She exits Center.*)

(*JANET crosses to love seat and sits. MATTHEW crosses behind desk to love seat and sits. BILLY enters up Center Left. CONSTANCE goes upstage and looks off, makes sure coast is clear.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Eagerly, as MRS. COLBY disappears*) Janet, I have news for you!

(*They all turn to her.*)

(*Crosses to JANET*) I'm going to kidnap your grandmother.

(*BILLY crosses down from hall to sofa.*)

JANET. You're what?!

CONSTANCE. We're not going to a bar. I'm going to take her straight to New York.

JANET. To do what?

CONSTANCE. To stay with me until this blows over!

JANET. It's too good to be true.

CONSTANCE. Then you think she'll like it?!

JANET. Like it? She'll love it— (*Crosses to Center*) If she doesn't think of Daddy!

CONSTANCE. I won't give her time to think of him! I'll take her to plays and concerts—and movies! We'll do the town!

JANET. And people! Let her meet lots of people!

CONSTANCE. She'll have to, if she lives with me!

JANET. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE*) It will be heaven! Sheer heaven! I'd give anything to be there! What will you do first?

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to BILLY*) First, we've got to get out of here!

BILLY. Whom, exactly, do you mean by "we"?

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling*) Mrs. Colby and I.

BILLY. That's what I thought.

CONSTANCE. (*Turning back to JANET*) I have everything in New York that I'll need tonight, but put a few things in a bag for your grandmother. (*Crosses to above love seat*) And after we've gone, you and Sarah can pack the rest of her things, and mine, can't you?

JANET. Yes, of course! But how will I get them in to you?

CONSTANCE. Oh!

BILLY. (*Dejectedly*) I'll give you three guesses! (*Crosses and sits sofa.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling at him affectionately*) Dear Billy! (*Briskly, turning back to JANET*) Yes, Mr. Gordon will bring everything in on the train. There is an afternoon train, isn't there?

JANET. Yes, at six o'clock.

CONSTANCE. Splendid. Then you'll have lots of time to pack.

JANET. (*Gaily*) We may need it! We may all be packing!

CONSTANCE. There's no danger of that! Your father will be very anxious to keep you when he discovers that your grandmother has gone!

JANET. (*Looking alarmed*) Oh, dear!

CONSTANCE. What?

JANET. Who's going to tell Daddy about Grandmother? That will be absolutely grisly.

CONSTANCE. Yes, it will! (*She thinks for a moment, then slowly turns her head to BILLY.*)

BILLY. (*Bitterly*) Of course! Why didn't we think of that before!

CONSTANCE. Billy, you are such a darling!

(*She says this with such conviction that BILLY is*

beginning to look more cheerful when JANET speaks.)

JANET. Oh, dear, we have forgotten—

MATTHEW. Sarah!

JANET. (*To CONSTANCE*) She's been with Grandmother for more than thirty years. And she worships her! It would break her heart if Grandmother just went off and left her!

BILLY. If she wants to go too, I'll need a truck to get the luggage to the station.

JANET. Oh, Sarah won't make any trouble, but we'll have to tell her!

CONSTANCE. Poor dear! Of course we will. Get her in! (*Crosses to chair Center and sits.*)

JANET. (*Rings the bell on desk, then crosses to CONSTANCE*) She's a most wonderful person! Even Daddy admires her. Sometimes we have a second girl, but Daddy keeps firing them, and then Sarah does everything herself! (*Crosses back to desk as SARAH enters.*)

SARAH. (*Appears in the doorway, and speaks in her usual unemotional tone. Crosses down to love seat*) Yes, ma'am?

JANET. (*Crosses to SARAH*) Sarah, we have quite a lot to tell you.

SARAH. Good or bad?

JANET. Well, it depends upon your point of view. Matthew and I think it's good! (*To make her meaning clearer, JANET takes MATTHEW's hand.*)

SARAH. It's happened! Just as your grandmother said it would! Does she know?

JANET. Yes.

SARAH. How's she taking it?

JANET. She's wonderful! But we're worried about Daddy.

SARAH. There's sense to that. And you know he'll blame her!

JANET. Yes. But Mrs. Warburton has thought of something to do.

SARAH. Thank heaven for that! (*Crosses down to CONSTANCE, prepared to listen.*)

CONSTANCE. I told Mrs. Colby that I'd take her to the village, to have a drink before lunch. But actually, I'm going to take her straight to New York.

SARAH. For how long?

CONSTANCE. For as long as she wants to stay!

SARAH. (*Says nothing, as she is considering the idea. Then a slow smile lights her face*) That'll do nicely. That'll bring him to his senses!

CONSTANCE. I think it might.

SARAH. And how soon will you be going?

CONSTANCE. As soon as Mrs. Colby has changed her dress!

SARAH. Then I'll just run up and have a look at her.

JANET. Be careful not to make her suspicious!

SARAH. I don't know what you take me for! (*She goes off Center Left.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Rises, crosses to JANET*) What a darling! I must have her in to visit us as soon as we're settled! (*Briskly*) Now Janet, what about the bag?

JANET. I'll do it at once.

CONSTANCE. And put it in the car, when it's ready!

JANET. Right! (*She hurries off Center.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Looking nervously at her watch*) We've wasted five minutes already! I can't think why, but I'm beginning to feel nervous.

BILLY. I can't think why either. After all, it's just a simple kidnapping!

CONSTANCE. (*Laughs, and then immediately looks troubled again*) I have an awful feeling that Graham's going to walk in, and spoil everything!

MATTHEW. He won't. He'll write until exactly one minute before he's due here.

CONSTANCE. (*Reassured*) Probably— Billy! (*Crosses to BILLY*) Did you turn my car around when you came back from the village?

BILLY. Did I? (*He thinks*) No, I didn't. Sorry!

MATTHEW. I'll do it. Are the keys in the car?

BILLY. I think so. (*He feels in his pocket*) I hope so!

CONSTANCE. Matthew, do make sure!

MATTHEW. I will. But they can't be lost.

CONSTANCE. (*As MATTHEW goes off at Center*) Anything can be lost!

BILLY. You're getting yourself into quite a state. Relax!

(*The TELEPHONE rings, and they both jump. He crosses to desk.*)

Shall I take it?

CONSTANCE. Yes!

BILLY. (*Lifts the receiver*) Hello.—What?—No, it isn't.—That's all right. (*He hangs up*) Graham would be pleased. They wanted the Lakeville Bar and Grill.

CONSTANCE. I don't like that telephone. I don't like it at all.

BILLY. Why not?

CONSTANCE. Eventually, someone's going to call to ask Graham what he thinks of Janet's marriage. It's bound to happen.

BILLY. (*He thinks*) We can filter the calls, of course.

CONSTANCE. Unless Graham happens to intercept one!

BILLY. We'd better take steps. (*He picks up the telephone and studies it*) If I pull this up by the roots, will it disconnect everything, or just this extension?

CONSTANCE. I don't know.

BILLY. We learn the wrong things at school! (*He replaces the telephone, and suddenly his face brightens*) What a fool I am! I'll simply cut the outside wire!

CONSTANCE. You can't. You'd be electrocuted. You have to have rubber gloves to do that.

BILLY. And I came away without my rubber gloves. But there's a rubber sponge in the kitchen! A great, fat rubber sponge!

CONSTANCE. And here are the scissors. (*Hands BILLY the shears.*)

BILLY. (*Takes them, holds them up*) And the rest is silence! (*He starts out, then stops*) I hope it occurs to you that I'm a very resourceful person!

CONSTANCE I couldn't admire you more!

BILLY. (*Looking very pleased*) Let's develop that theme when I get back! (*With a change of voice*) In the meantime, freeze on to that telephone in case it rings before I can cut its throat!

CONSTANCE. I won't move. (*Sits on desk. Hand on phone.*)

(*BILLY goes off at Center. Presently MATTHEW enters Center.*)

MATTHEW. (*Crosses down Center*) The keys were in the car, and I left them there.

CONSTANCE. (*Smiling, but not looking up*) Oh, thank you, Matthew.

MATTHEW. I was tempted to leave the motor running, but I thought that was too cloak and daggerish.

CONSTANCE. (*Still not looking up*) Quite.

MATTHEW. Is anything wrong?

CONSTANCE. No. I'm just waiting to grab the telephone in case it rings.

MATTHEW. (*Crosses back of desk*) Oh, that's a very good idea!

CONSTANCE. It won't ring much longer! Mr. Gordon is going to cut the wire.

MATTHEW. He's a very resourceful person, isn't he?

CONSTANCE. Yes. And endlessly kind— Matthew! I was forgetting the portrait! I'll have to take that in myself! (*She starts to leave the desk, then thinks better of it*) Would you be kind enough to get it for me? And the paints?

MATTHEW. Of course. (*He hurries into the study and returns with the canvas and the box of paints*) Here we are.

CONSTANCE. Good. Now will you be an angel and take them out to the car. Put the canvas in the luggage

compartment—flat. Make sure nothing is on top of it, we don't want him to smear.

MATTHEW. Heaven forbid!

JANET. (*Enters Center. Eagerly*) The bag's all ready, and in the car!

CONSTANCE. And where's your grandmother?

JANET. Not half dressed!

CONSTANCE. Good heavens! What's the matter?

JANET. She decided to do her hair again!

CONSTANCE. Oh, no!

JANET. Yes, and it can take up to half an hour!

CONSTANCE. If it does, we're lost.

JANET. It won't. Sarah's in there pitching now. But you can count on another five minutes.

CONSTANCE. Lovely! (*She again concentrates on the telephone*) Now put your father-in-law in the car.

JANET. What?!

MATTHEW. The portrait. (*He picks up the portrait and the box of paints.*)

JANET. Let me carry something. (*He lets her take the box.*)

(*They go out at Center. CONSTANCE looks after them for a moment, smiling, then again concentrates on her telephone. Almost immediately BILLY enters Center door. He is brandishing the scissors and looks very triumphant.*)

BILLY. Mission accomplished!

CONSTANCE. Thank heaven! (*Rises; three steps to Center.*)

(*The TELEPHONE rings.*)

BILLY. I wonder what the hell I cut! (*BILLY sits chair Center.*)

(*The PHONE rings again.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Lifting the receiver, and speaking calmly, after a slight hesitation*) Colby's residence—Mr. Colby is working, and cannot be disturbed. (*Firmly, after listening*) We don't interrupt him under any circumstances. Who?—Oh, Mr. Williams. Of the *New York Times*. (*She and BILLY bow to each other*) Yes, Mr. Williams—No, I'm not a member of the family. I'm simply a guest here—Not at all, Constance Warburton.—That's right, Constance Arrott—Yes I'm doing his portrait—Oh, how nice of you—Not excluding Augustus John! Really!

(*She makes a gesture to BILLY, to indicate that she has this situation in hand, and BILLY makes himself comfortable in his chair.*)

Yes, it was his daughter—Not *very* surprised—I can't speak for Mr. Colby, of course, but we're all delighted.—Gladly!—After his brilliant career in the Navy, he returned to Harvard, and graduated in 1947. With honor! Since then he has been working for his Ph.D. In Political Economy—Yes—Very brilliant—Yes, this is just a temporary post—He's going to join the faculty of a mid-western University.

BILLY. We hope!

CONSTANCE. (*Still at the telephone*) No, we don't know his family—Oh, I'm sure they're not, because Matthew has worked since he was a very small boy—Exactly, since he did it all himself. Yes, nowhere but in America! Really heart-warming—Not at all. Not at all. Yes—yes—yes. Goodbye. (*She hangs up*) Billy, I have an idea!

BILLY. I'm sure you have.

CONSTANCE. I'm glad you didn't cut the telephone wire! (*Comes down.*)

BILLY. So am I! Now we have the *Times* on our side!

CONSTANCE. I mean, the simplest way to tie up a telephone is to use it! All we have to do is talk to someone!

BILLY. I'll get my sister! She thinks anything under an hour is a wrong number.

(He is about to get to his feet when GRAHAM appears in the Center doorway, and CONSTANCE speaks in a voice of alarm.)

CONSTANCE. Graham! You shouldn't be here! The hour isn't up!

GRAHAM. I know. I just came down to see what was wrong with the lights.

CONSTANCE. The lights!

GRAHAM. Yes. I was sitting at my desk, and the lamp suddenly went out. I thought it was just the bulb, but I tried the switch and none of the lights would go on. Are they all right in here?

CONSTANCE. We haven't tried them.

GRAHAM. I'll see. *(Crosses up Center. He turns the switch, and nothing happens)* Out here too! I'll call the light company.

CONSTANCE. Oh! Is that—necessary?

GRAHAM. They'll have to send a repairman. I don't know anything about electricity. Do you, Billy?

BILLY. No. I don't know one wire from another.

(GRAHAM takes a step towards the desk, and the TELEPHONE rings. CONSTANCE and BILLY stiffen, and exchange a glance as GRAHAM lifts the receiver. CONSTANCE crosses to Center.)

GRAHAM. Hello— Yes— This is he— Who?—Oh, from the *Tribune*.

BILLY. Here we go.

GRAHAM. *(He listens, looks puzzled for a moment, and then laughs)* No, it can't be my daughter— Quite sure— Yes, her name is Janet. *(Harshly, after listening)* Matthew Anderson!—When was this reported to have happened?

CONSTANCE. (*In a low voice, to BILLY*) Head Mrs. Colby off and get her into the car. I'll handle this.

BILLY. I wouldn't know how! (*He smiles shyly at GRAHAM, and hurries out at Center. Exits Center Right.*)

GRAHAM. (*In a very tense voice*) Your informant is quite correct, he is my secretary— I can add nothing to the information you already possess! I will make no statement! Thank you. (*He hangs up.*)

CONSTANCE. Graham, I want to talk to you.

GRAHAM. Later! (*Without looking at her, he strides across to the study door*) Matthew! Matthew!

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to GRAHAM*) He's not there, Graham.

GRAHAM. (*Swinging around to face her*) Where is he?

CONSTANCE. He's—doing something that I asked him to do. But he'll be back in a minute.

GRAHAM. (*Crosses up Center*) I'll drive him out of my house!

CONSTANCE. And Janet too?

GRAHAM. (*Stops short*) Then you know!

CONSTANCE. Yes.

GRAHAM. (*Unpleasantly, coming down*) How do you know?

CONSTANCE. Janet told me, a few minutes ago.

GRAHAM. And you can speak of it calmly!

CONSTANCE. (*Pleasantly*) I feel very calm about it. Perhaps complacent would be a better word. You see, I practically arranged it!

(*He looks at her incredulously.*)

Not their falling in love, of course. They had done that on their own. But the marriage was my idea.

GRAHAM. I can hardly believe it!

CONSTANCE. (*Concerned*) Oh—Graham! You're not happy about it, are you?

GRAHAM. (*Crosses down to love seat. Bitterly*) Happy!

CONSTANCE. I'm so sorry! But I know you were fond of Matthew.

(Hastily, as GRAHAM tries to speak.)

That was one of the first things I liked about you! I remember the afternoon I got here. You and he were going into the study, and you smiled at him, with that dear smile of yours, and said something sweet to him, and I said to myself, "That's a nice person! I want to know him better!"

GRAHAM. *(In a somewhat gentler voice)* I can't deny that I liked Matthew. *(His anger reasserts itself)* As a secretary!

CONSTANCE. *(Laughing again)* Oh, Graham, don't try to be stuffy! You can't do it! *(Crosses to GRAHAM)* You know as well as I do that you either like people or don't like them! When I came in here that day, I didn't like you because you were a successful author! It was the other things about you that impressed me!

GRAHAM. What other things?

CONSTANCE. Not your looks! I'm careful about that! When I meet someone who's exceptionally attractive, I deliberately set up resistance! So it was more than your looks. The expression in your eyes, for one thing. *(Sits love seat)* I thought I had never seen so much strength, and so much kindness. And I began to wonder how I was going to get that into your portrait. I knew the sweetness would be easy, because that's in every line. But that *inner* strength! That was the problem! And I think that I solved it. Do you know how?

GRAHAM. *(Enormously interested)* No.

CONSTANCE. *(Rises)* I put a line here that you haven't got! *(She indicates a curved line on her own cheek)* And it did the trick! When people look at that picture, they won't see just an intelligent, good-looking, amiable man. They'll see you.

GRAHAM. *(Very pleased with life and with CONSTANCE)* You're a very perceptive person, aren't you?

CONSTANCE. Don't forget that I had the good fortune of meeting you in your own surrounding. Here, in a

few hours, I understood you. Simply because I was seeing you among your own lovely things. (*Crosses to Center.*)

GRAHAM. (*Looking about his handsome room with satisfaction*) It's quite true. The things we choose to live with do tell a good deal about us.

CONSTANCE. And the atmosphere tells even more! (*Crosses down to GRAHAM*) When you step into this house you know, you absolutely know, that you're not going to hear a raised voice, or see an angry face.

(*GRAHAM is greatly enjoying this when JANET and MATTHEW enter Center, arm in arm.*)

JANET. We made him quite comfortable in the luggage compartment, and— (*She breaks off, looking terrorized, as she sees GRAHAM, and drops MATTHEW's arm*) Oh, Daddy!

(*At the sound of JANET's voice, GRAHAM stiffens, and is preparing to be extremely angry when his eye falls on CONSTANCE, who is still looking at him with rapt admiration. GRAHAM immediately adopts a serene expression, and speaks in a low, musical voice.*)

GRAHAM. (*Rises*) Come in, Janet dear. And Matthew.

(*JANET and MATTHEW, looking very startled, come down approximately one foot, and then discover that they haven't the courage to go further. They stop, and there is a little silence. Then MATTHEW makes an effort, and speaks in a reasonably calm voice. Crosses down Right by GRAHAM. JANET crosses back of table.*)

MATTHEW. Mr. Colby, I'd like to talk to you for a moment.

GRAHAM. Very well.

MATTHEW. Could you—come into the study?

GRAHAM. I don't think that's necessary. (*He smiles sweetly*) We can discuss your marriage quite openly.

(MATTHEW and JANET look as if they were seeing a miracle, and they slowly turn to CONSTANCE, who looks tense but hopeful.)

CONSTANCE. Graham! (*Crosses up to JANET.*)

GRAHAM. No, Mrs. Warburton did not betray your secret. (*An angry edge creeps into his voice*) I had to undergo the humiliation of hearing it from a newspaper reporter. (*Crosses to chair Center.*)

MATTHEW. (*With real contrition*) I'm sorry! I—

GRAHAM. (*His voice rising another half-tone*) That I discovered your guilt! I daresay.

MATTHEW. Oh, no! There was no guilt involved.

GRAHAM. You don't deny that you married my daughter!

MATTHEW. No. (*Smiles in a rather gingerly fashion*) But I don't think that marriage is a crime.

GRAHAM. I am not a lawyer. It's possible that there is no law under which you could be convicted. But according to any decent standards, you are a criminal!

CONSTANCE. Graham! (*Crosses back of sofa to Left.*)

GRAHAM. (*Now thoroughly enraged, makes a gesture to silence her*) You accepted my hospitality for three months! You lived on my bounty! And not as a servant! You were treated as an equal. And when you had crawled your way into my confidence, you abused my kindness by persuading my daughter to ruin her life!

JANET. (*Crosses to GRAHAM. In a very little voice*) Daddy, that's not true! Matthew didn't persuade me—

GRAHAM. Be quiet! (*Loudly, turning back to MATTHEW*) Or perhaps you conferred an honor on her, by having her marry a laundress's son.

CONSTANCE. Graham, that's inexcusable!

JANET. (*Crosses to MATTHEW. Very close to tears*)
It is!

GRAHAM. He doesn't say so! But perhaps it takes more courage to contradict me than it did to seduce my daughter. (*Crosses to chair Center.*)

(MATTHEW seats JANET on love seat.)

MATTHEW. (*Taking off his glasses, and polishing them, and speaking in a very quiet voice. Crosses to GRAHAM*) There's something I'd like to get settled at once. I was in the Navy for four years, so I can probably talk louder than you can. If you want to shout, we'll shout, but I think it would be pleasanter for the ladies if we didn't.

CONSTANCE. (*Sits sofa*) Don't you mind us! You go right ahead!

GRAHAM. (*Loudly*) What you will do, is leave my house before I kick you out of it! (*Sits chair Center.*)

MATTHEW. (*Crosses back to Center. Puts glasses in pocket*) Evidently we're going to shout. (*He faces GRAHAM, stands erect, and bellows*) Now hear this! (*The OTHERS start slightly, and he continues in a more moderate tone, but rapidly*) What you call hospitality is better known as sweated labor! Your house is one of the few institutions outside of Russia in which a man is compelled to work twelve hours a day, under conditions that would appall a Chinese coolie.

(GRAHAM rises.)

That I have survived three months here is a miracle made possible by my love for Janet, and by my hope that I would be able to rescue her from this better decorated Wuthering Heights. Secondly! You greatly enjoy meeting and being on good terms with important people. By a stroke of good luck you are now connected with one by marriage. I refer to myself. Within three years you will be extremely proud of the connection. Thirdly! I should like nothing better than to take my wife out of your house, and never return to it, but it

happens that I have no home prepared for her. I shall therefore, with the greatest reluctance, consent to remain in your employ. And if that expression means what I think it does, you'd better think again! You'd better remember that you are at present floundering in the sea of Victorian economics, and that you will certainly sink without me.

GRAHAM. (*Interrupts*) Now look here—

MATTHEW. So I will give you exactly five minutes to decide whether you are going to keep a roof over our heads, or make a fool of yourself in print. And Thirdly!

CONSTANCE. Fourthly!

MATTHEW. Thank you! (*Again to GRAHAM*) If you ever make another crack about my mother, it will be the last time you speak on earth. You will find us in the study. Come, Janet. (*Exits Right.*)

(*He flings open the door of the study, and JANET runs in with an expression in which admiration, awe, and an obvious desire to giggle are curiously mingled. The door bangs closed.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Rises*) And a Merry Christmas to all! (*She turns to GRAHAM, and discovers that he is looking apoplectic*) Graham, be careful! You might explode!

GRAHAM. (*Rises*) He'll give me five minutes! In five minutes I'll have the police here to get them out of the house! (*He crosses to the phone.*)

CONSTANCE. Graham, stop!

(*He hurries on to the desk, and lifts the receiver.*)
You'll have everyone in Connecticut laughing at you!

GRAHAM. (*He hesitates, and finally replaces the receiver*) Yes. That would have been a mistake. There's no need for police intervention. (*He smiles unpleasantly*) He will go quietly, and we'll never hear of him again.

CONSTANCE. I think you're wrong! I think he may be a great person eventually.

GRAHAM. He's finished.

CONSTANCE. Because you're going to fire him? He'll be safely established in a college before long.

GRAHAM. (*Grimly*) Not in America.

CONSTANCE. It's a big country, Graham. And you don't own it.

GRAHAM. Quite so.

CONSTANCE. Good Lord, you think you do! Graham, you've been reading too many press clippings! But be reasonable! Most people in this country have never even heard of you.

GRAHAM. The influential ones have.

CONSTANCE. (*Troubled*) Yes. (*Recovering*) They've heard of me, too!

GRAHAM. (*Complacently*) It will be interesting to see which of us has greater weight.

CONSTANCE. I can tell you now. I have.

GRAHAM. Indeed. (*Sits love seat.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to GRAHAM*) Yes! I haven't a file, bulging with letters from important people. But I don't collect autographs. I collect friends! I've been doing it for twenty years, and I have a lovely collection.

GRAHAM. Then perhaps one of your friends will be able to give Matthew a job of some sort.

CONSTANCE. I don't doubt it. But if you're wise, you'll keep Matthew here. You care what the world thinks of you. And the world loves romantic stories.

GRAHAM. The world isn't apt to hear Matthew's story.

CONSTANCE. It will read it tomorrow in the *New York Times*. I talked to a charming Mr. Williams this morning!

GRAHAM. (*Rises, crosses back to CONSTANCE*) This is a conspiracy!

CONSTANCE. Yes. To make two young people happy. Get in on it. It's great fun! All you have to do is keep Matthew here, working his head off for you! And not for life! Just for a few months! He'll be leaving for Minnesota in February.

GRAHAM. Minnesota?

CONSTANCE. Yes, the president of the University has promised your mother that he'll take Matthew on for the second semester. You see, Graham, friends are useful!

GRAHAM. (*In a very unpleasant voice*) Let me understand this!

(CONSTANCE turns to him.)

Mother has arranged to get Matthew a job?

CONSTANCE. (*Hesitantly, as she realizes that she has dropped a brick*) Yes. You see—

GRAHAM. Then Mother has been involved in this conspiracy against me!

CONSTANCE. Graham, there is no conspiracy against you! But all of us—

BILLY. (*Enters. Hesitantly. Crosses to back of Center table*) I just wanted to tell you that—that thing you're going to take to New York is in the car.

CONSTANCE. Oh, thank you, Billy!

GRAHAM. Answer my question! Did Mother know of the situation between Matthew and Janet?

CONSTANCE. (*After hesitating*) I think you'd better ask her, Graham.

GRAHAM. (*Starts up Center*) I will!

CONSTANCE. (*Sharply*) Graham! (*He turns, stops up Center*) Your mother isn't in the house.

GRAHAM. No?

CONSTANCE. No. She came in, but she went out again.

GRAHAM. (*Coldly*) Thank you. (*Crosses back down Center. Crosses Right of sofa, and exits down Left through French windows.*)

(CONSTANCE and BILLY look after him until he is safely off.)

BILLY. (*Crosses down Left and looks out, turns back*) How did it go?!

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses to BILLY*) I don't know! We all shouted, and made threats at each other. But I think he may let them stay.

BILLY. If he doesn't, I'll bring them in with the luggage.

CONSTANCE. Billy, you've been absolutely wonderful about everything!

BILLY. It's just a sample of what you could expect if you married me.

CONSTANCE. We'll discuss that later. I must go!

BILLY. (*Crosses to window down Left*) There's no hurry! He's not even halfway to the tool-shed! Will you have dinner with me tomorrow night?

CONSTANCE. (*Crosses up Left Center for coat*) Willingly!

BILLY. I like that tone! I like it very much!

CONSTANCE. Now go out and keep Graham there!

BILLY. (*Looking out window*) Don't worry! I won't let him get past the petunias until I've heard your car drive away. (*Crosses back to French windows*) What time shall I call for you tomorrow night?

CONSTANCE. Seven?

BILLY. I suppose I can live until then. (*He looks out through the windows*) He's almost at the end. Will you tell me the truth about something?

CONSTANCE. Yes.

BILLY. (*Crosses to CONSTANCE*) Has Graham ever kissed you?

CONSTANCE. No.

BILLY. (*Immediately kisses her*) Then I'm one up on the buzzard going in! (*Exits down Left through the French windows.*)

(CONSTANCE smiles, picks up her bag and gloves, and turns. At this moment MRS. COLBY enters Center, wearing a red dress with a black hat and pink feather, carrying long pink gloves. When CONSTANCE sees her, she speaks in a tone of alarm.)

CONSTANCE. Mrs. Colby!

MRS. COLBY. Don't worry, my dear. (MRS. COLBY

goes up to the bookshelves, Right, and begins to tumble books out on the floor.)

CONSTANCE. But Graham is in the garden looking for you! He may come in at any minute! *(In an agony of apprehension)* What are you doing?

MRS. COLBY. Ah, here we are! *(She discloses a safe in the wall, and begins to manipulate the dial)* Dear Sarah always forgets the combination, so it just occurred to me that I had better take the jewel-box in myself. I haven't much that's valuable, but I never feel quite dressed without a few rings and bracelets. We will be going to the opera, I suppose.

CONSTANCE. *(Dazed)* If you like.

MRS. COLBY. It always bores me, but I do like to see a lot of well-dressed people on their good behavior! *(She opens the safe, takes out a jewel box, and closes the safe)* We'll just leave the books on the floor. It'll give Graham something to kick if he's in the kicking mood. *(Crosses up Center)* Shall we go, my dear?

CONSTANCE. Just a minute! *(She looks at her steadily)* How did you know?

MRS. COLBY. I simply asked myself what I would do if I were in your place. And I decided that I'd take the old girl to New York, for one last binge!

CONSTANCE. She's going to have it!

(CONSTANCE puts her arm around MRS. COLBY, and they go out laughing, as the Curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

LATE LOVE

PROPERTY PLOT

FURNITURE

On Set:

Chippendale chair down Left
Green Velour chair stage Left
Sofa stage Left
Drop leaf table upstage Left
Queen Anne chair Left upstage by door
Pie crust table stage Center
Occasional chair stage Center
Queen Anne chair Right upstage by door
Knee hole desk stage Right Center
Love seat stage Right Center
Desk chair stage Right Center
Chippendale chair down Right
What-not lamp stand upstage Right

In Hall:

Upholstered bench
2 tubs of hydrangas

PROPS:

On Desk Right:

Letter for Matthew to read
Blotter and pad
Telephone
Inkstand and pen
Tea bell

On Table Center:

Bowl of flowers

1st Act—white lily-of-valley

2nd and 3rd Acts—yellow lily-of-valley

Chinese urn

On Drop Leaf Table:

Silver urn of flowers

1st Act—white roses

2nd and 3rd Acts—yellow roses

8 magazines

1 silver lamp

1 Chinese figure

Back of 3 Bay Windows in Hall:

Shrubbery

On Terrace:

2 tubs of hydrangas

2 grass mats

On Wall Left and Right of Doors:

2 brackets with:

2 candles in each bracket

Back of Desk:

1 what-not table with lamp shade

On 2nd shelf of table—2 figurines

On Wall Right:

2 pictures

Over Mantel:

1 oil painting

On Floor:

Green carpet

Fireplace:

Set of andirons

Set of fire tools

1 box of laurel set on andirons

*Off-Stage Right:**Constance Bag containing:*

- 2 car keys
- Cigarette case
- Cigarette lighter
- 1 artist pad (small)
- 1 pencil
- Portrait easel
- Portrait of Graham
- Paint box containing:
 - Pallet
 - Brushes
 - Paints
- Letter file containing 12 letters
- Connecticut newspaper
- Typewriter

Box containing:

- 1 letter addressed to Allen Patterson
- 12 addressed letters for mailing
- 24 sheets plain typing paper
- 6 typed letters for signing

Off-Stage Left:

- Garden shears for Mrs. Colby
- Sun hat for Mrs. Colby
- Gloves for Mrs. Colby

On Fireplace Mantel:

- 2 candelabras—3 candles each
- Bowl of flowers
- 1st Act—white snapdragons and carnations
- 2nd and 3rd Acts—yellow snapdragons and carnations
- 2 Chinese bowls on wood bases

Bookcase Left:

- 4 shelves of books

Top shelf with following:

Ornaments:

- 2 plates on easels
- 1 pitcher
- 1 tea pot

Bookcase Right:

Top shelf with following

Ornaments:

- 2 plates on easels
- 1 coffee pot
- 1 cream pitcher

2nd Shelf:

Built-in wall safe

(Inside safe—jewel box)

Book—“*Walks in Rome*”

22 books

1st Shelf: 24 books

3rd Shelf: 24 books

4th Shelf: 24 books

Off-Stage Up Center:

1 tea table on wheels

On Table:

Lace cloth

5 teaspoons

5 cups and saucers

Dinner bell

1 silver tea service consisting of:

Tea pot

Sugar bowl

Lemon plate

Slop bowl

Lemon fork

1 silver tray with bread and butter sandwiches

1 silver tray for serving drinks

2 glasses of lemonade

- 1 glass of gingerale
- 1 cup, saucer and teaspoon (to be brought on
by Matthew)
- 1 large dinner gong
- 2 packages cigarettes for Billy and Constance
- 2 wrist watches for Billy and Matthew

On Sofa:

- 4 cushions

LATE LOVE

LIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Footlight—3—12 light section Pink and Amber
Balcony Rail—24—Lekos—Pink, Amber and Blue
#1 Pipe—18 Fresnels—Amber
6 Lekos—Amber
#2 Pipe—16 Fresnels—Amber

HALL PIPE:

6 Lekos—Pink and Amber
#3 Pipe— 8 Projectors—Amber

TERRACE PIPE:

8 Projectors—Amber
3-9 Light Sec. Xray Border—Amber

ON FLOOR:

Back of Bay Window—2-1000w Olivettes—White
and Blue

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Comedy. 3 acts. By William McCleery. 4 men. 5 women. Interior. 25' 1"

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(Royalty, \$50.00.)

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by the spirits and welcome them with a friendly
ness slowly learns that the spirits are those of the former
caretaker and maid, both perverse, who had corrupted the
souls of the innocents. In a final scene, which is a paroxysm of
fear and terror, she learns that the two are now inseparable,
the evil and the innocents. "In a lifetime of constant playgoing,
I do not recall a single theatre-piece which held me as spell-
bound."—*Journal American*. "At last we have a horror play
that adults can admire and enjoy."—*Times*.

(Royalty, \$50.00.)

SEASON IN THE SUN

Comedy. 3 acts. By Wolcott Gibbs. 9 men, 6 women. Interior. Modern costumes.

George Crane, successful writer for a sophisticated magazine, has been ill and has hence gone on the wagon. He takes his wife and two small children and rents a Summer cottage with the prospect of renouncing his job and his dissolute friends, and of devoting himself to writing a serious novel based on his own reformed-drunk thesis about New York. What he gets instead of his dissolute companions are, among others, a couple named Anderson, polite and frightful bores who are slumming on the island because of her asthma; a slovenly landlady who wears a sailor cap; her drunken male companion; an old chum from his former newspaper days in Paris; a solicitous blonde who wants to help him write his book, and the editor of the magazine who wants him back. After a fight with his wife over the blonde, he goes out and gets drunk. This restores his proper sense of proportion and, at the urging of his editor, he tears up his manuscript, brushes off the blonde, and leaves the island just ahead of the hurricane. "Laughs are many, deserved and irresistible."—John Mason Brown in *Saturday Review of Literature*.

(Royalty, \$50.00.)

LITTLE SCANDAL

Comedy. 3 acts. By Florence Ryerson and Alice D. G. Miller. 6 men, 6 women. Interior. Modern costumes.

An up-to-the-minute, laughter-provoking comedy which has proved a hit ever since its tryout at the Pasadena Playhouse. It tells the trials and tribulations of Angela Pettigrew, a charming young secretary to a roving commission from the United Nations, who returns from Europe to her small-town home with a just-born baby and a not-too-convincing story of how she happens to have him on her hands. As might be expected, the town thinks the worst, but her troubles are all in the reverse. Instead of ostracizing her, the ladies of the community go modern in a big way. They insist fiercely upon backing her up. They demand that she stop telling that absurd story about a friend dying in a hospital abroad and admit frankly and bravely that the baby is hers. Since her story, however unbelievable, happens to be true, this produces a difficult situation, not only for Angela, but also for the rising young diplomat she has returned to marry. When two crooks from the black-market-for-babies come into the picture the complications grow even worse—and more hilarious.

(Royalty, \$25.00.)